"HERE ARE HER EIGHT FINGER-PRINTS. GET BUSY, JOE! SEE IF YOU CAN GET THE THUMBS UNDER THE EDGE THERE"

THE ARGYLE CASE

BY

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FOUNDED ON THE PLAY
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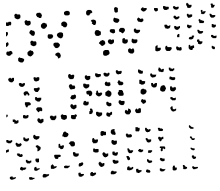

THE ARGYLE CASE

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CHAPTER I

"NO sir, not a cent! I warned you that I'd have nothing to do with you if you disobeyed me. In spite of all I said you have deliberately defied me by marrying the girl. You must take the consequences. I disown you. You'll never get a penny of my money."

John Argyle, his face purple with rage, his white hair and carefully trimmed whiskers bristling with anger, paced up and down the library of his palatial Fifth Avenue home, while a young man, barely in his twenties, his face pale but with lines of determination about his smooth, sensitive mouth, stood by and listened.

The winter afternoon was drawing to a close, and the rays of the setting sun, streaming through the stained-glass windows, bathed the artistic interior in a glow of rich, warm color. It was a picturesque room, tastefully furnished, with Pompeiian red the dominant note. The walls were all lined with books, the shelves and rest of the woodwork of black flemish oak, and the chairs of the same wood, uphol-

stered in a red leather. Between the shelves, filled with handsomely bound tomes, was a door which led to the hall. On the other side the books extended as far as a deep bay, opposite which was a large fireplace with dull-brass candelabra on the mantel and huge pine logs throwing out a grateful heat. In a cozy, well-lighted niche was a magnificently carved teakwood table, with telephone and nouveau art reading-lamp. On the opposite side another table was covered with a fabric so exquisite and costly that it might well have graced the collection of some connoisseur. On it was a confused litter of books, newspapers, and cigar-boxes. Several large, comfortable arm-chairs were scattered about, and on the floor one trod on a large, richly woven silk rug of a shade to harmonize with the general color scheme of the room. Conspicuous over the door was a large framed portrait of John Argyle. A truly beautiful room, conducive to reverie or study; but to-day its only occupants were too much excited to take particular heed of their surroundings.

The situation was tense. A spark at any moment might bring about an explosion. There was a difference of forty years and more between the two men, and it needed only a glance to see that they were father and son. When the elder had ceased his choleric tirade and relapsed into a sulky silence, interrupted only at intervals by a series of angry snorts that sounded like petty explosions, the younger man said, respectfully:

"I don't ask you for money. I merely asked for what is mine. If I could get now some of the money

my grandfather left me, it would help me to get a start in life. It is hard that I should have to wait until I'm thirty. I don't suppose I'll ever be able to earn enough with my art work. I intend to give up my studio. I want to go into business. I have an opportunity to buy a small interest in a Detroit automobile plant. They offer me a salaried position if I can furnish a little capital which will be amply secured. I have investigated the thing, and I'm anxious to get into it. I shall only be too glad to get away from New York." Bitterly he added: "Incidentally, it will relieve you of my unwelcome presence in this house."

The elder man had continued pacing the floor like an infuriated lion, apparently paying not the slightest attention to what his son was saying. The young man's closing sentence, however, had the unfortunate effect of adding fresh fuel to the already raging fire. Stopping short and turning quickly, he shook his clenched fist in his son's face and thundered:

"If you are no longer *persona grata* under this roof, whose is the fault? You have no one to blame but yourself. How have you repaid all I have done for you? I gave you every advantage. You've had a good education, a luxurious home, everything you could wish for. What return did you make for all this? You have taken pleasure—yes, sir, deliberate pleasure, in thwarting me at every turn. I asked only one thing—you knew well that my heart was set on it. It was the dearest, most cherished wish of my life. For twenty years, while you and Mary have been growing up side by side, it was my fondest

hope that you would one day marry. Instead of sympathizing with these plans, you have deliberately scorned them and set me at defiance by contracting a secret marriage."

Bruce shrugged his shoulders as he replied, calmly:

"You asked the impossible. You wanted me to marry Mary, but it was too late even had I loved her. My word was already given to another. Would you have had me throw Nan unceremoniously overboard just to further my own selfish ends? Besides, Mary has never cared enough for me to marry me. We've been brother and sister—nothing more. The idea of anything else never entered my head or hers. She has known all along how fond I am of Nan. When you first suggested the matter Nan and I were already engaged. Surely you wouldn't have had your son play the part of a welsher."

The argument was unanswerable, and Argyle, Sr., knew it, but all his life he had been accustomed to make laws for others, never to have them laid down for himself. What cared he about sentimental boy and girl promises when his heart had been set on seeing his only son marry the orphan of his old comrade, a girl he had adopted as his daughter? When poor Masuret, deserted by his faithless wife, died some fifteen years ago and left little Mary in his care, he had promised him that one day she should marry Bruce. That anything else could happen had never entered his head. The idea that young folks should take their future into their own hands and arrange it to suit themselves was rank rebellion, deserving of fitting punishment. Unable to find words, he merely spluttered:

"Love fiddlesticks! That's all moonshine! Marriage is based on something more substantial. You'll rue it. I'll teach you a lesson that you'll remember. Had you behaved yourself you would have succeeded me one day as head of Argyle & Co. Your conduct convinces me that you are not fit for any position of responsibility and trust. A firm of the importance of ours requires at its head a man of tact, intelligence, and sound judgment. These qualities you do not possess, and never will. You're a fool to your own interests, and always will be. I'm done with you. As you've made your bed, so you can lie on it. I'll give you a small allowance to keep you from starving, but that's all you'll get. I'm going to telephone to my lawyer right now. Mr. Hurley will come here to-day and draw up a new will leaving everything to Mary."

All his life Mr. Argyle had acted on impulse. He always attributed his success to the fact that once he made up his mind he stuck to it, right or wrong. Crossing quickly to the desk, he picked up the receiver:

"Give me John 3486." While waiting for the number he glared at the young man, as if expecting him to make some protest; but Bruce, although a shade paler, remained calm.

"Very well, sir," he said, "you know best. No doubt Mary will make better use of it than I. I'm sorry I've offended you. I did not do it to annoy you, although you seem to think so. That is absurd. I married Nan because I loved her. Mary never cared for me in that way."

"Sentimental rubbish!" grunted the merchant,

who in his forty odd years of money-grubbing had forgotten that romance and sentiment ruled the world. "Mary's too sensible a girl not to have accepted you, if you'd treated her right."

The telephone buzzed. The old gentleman turned to the transmitter.

"Hello—is that you, Hurley? This is Argyle—yes—I'm here at the house. I'd like you to come up to see me regarding a little business matter—about drawing a will. Yes—a new one. Oh, any time will suit me—this evening or afternoon. All right; make it this afternoon. I'll wait in for you. Good-by." Turning again to the young man, he went on testily: "Mary knew my wishes, and she would have respected them. But she saw your infatuation for that girl, and could do nothing—"

The young man shook his head.

"You are mistaken, father. You think you can manage affairs of the heart as you are accustomed to manage affairs of finance. It can't be done, and bigger men than you have failed. I don't blame you for getting angry at me." Bitterly he added: "We never got along any too well—you are never satisfied, always expecting the impossible. This has never been a home to me since poor mother died. I'll be glad to get away."

Argyle, Sr., eyed his son narrowly and distrustfully. They had never been friends. By nature cold and reserved, his attitude to his son had been that of a stern, exacting master who must be obeyed implicitly, no matter how preposterous the command. By nature a martinet and strict disciplinarian, impatient, intolerant of argument, accustomed to rule

and to be obeyed without question, he had resented his son's independence of spirit, and interpreted it rightly or wrongly as wilful defiance of his wishes and orders. There were times when he had wished things might be otherwise, when he could have clasped his son to his bosom and taken pride in planning out his future, but this last disobedience he could not forgive. It was unpardonable. It had completely shattered the one illusion he had left. If a shred of emotion had been excited in his breast at the mention of his dead wife, he managed to conceal it. His voice was hard and unyielding as ever as he asked:

"Where are you going?"

"I told you—out West."

"You have no means."

"No—that's why I came to you."

The old man shook his head.

"No, sir—not a cent. I couldn't if I would. That money is tied up until you reach the age of thirty. You are now only twenty-four. For six years to come you must either be satisfied to live under this roof or earn a living outside."

The boy's face flushed. With spirit he replied:

"Then I'll go out and earn it. I don't know at what. Like most rich men's sons, I'm not good for much. I don't know how to work, because I was never taught. But I'll get along somehow. I'll do anything as long as it's decent."

For a moment the old gentleman looked at his son, and there was a look in his face as if he rather admired the boy's pluck. He made a gesture as if about to take him to his arms. But if he felt any

such inclination the mood quickly passed. The boy had deliberately disobeyed him, made a mésalliance. He was hurt in his pride. That he could never forgive. Coldly he replied:

"You must get along as best you can—I shall never forgive you."

The young man turned to go.

"Very well—if I go to the devil—it will be on your conscience. You're very hard and unjust, and in your heart you know it."

The old man bounded. Wrathfully he retorted:

"I know nothing of the kind. You alone are to blame. You've wilfully disobeyed me in this case, as in many others. You have never done anything I wanted you to. And now you've disgraced me by marrying a girl without social position and of whose people we know nothing—a disgraceful, degrading marriage I call it, and of which one day you yourself will be heartily ashamed."

Until now the young man's attitude had been deferential, his manner that of a son who, no matter how he may differ with his father, feels in duty bound to listen respectfully to all he has to say. But when his parent so forgot himself as to attack the honor of the girl he loved, no filial consideration could longer restrain him. His face flushing with indignation, he burst out hotly:

"That's a lie! My wife is as good as we are, every bit! Her folks may not have as much money as you have, but at least what they have they came by honestly, which is more than some of us can say. Is your money all as clean as it might be?"

The question came direct and with all the force

of a blow. To Argyle, Sr., it struck home like a thrust. He tried to answer, but his voice failed him. Speechless with rage, he could only gasp in his efforts to utter the words of wrath that would not come. Who better than he knew that his record would hardly bear inspection?

John Argyle had always been a firm believer in the dictum: "Get money honestly if you can, but get it." Having found the task of accumulating a fortune honestly a difficult job, he changed his tactics and got rich as best he could. Starting life as a promoter, he picked up considerable money in shady real-estate deals. Branching out, he financed undertakings of various sorts, and was soon reputed very wealthy, and looked up to as one of the prominent men of the community. Later, he bought several thousand acres of cheap farm-land near a prosperous town and cleverly engineered a land boom. He bought a street-railway and bribed the city authorities to allow him to extend the lines where he would most profit by them, so that he had controlled even the natural growth of the city for his own advantages. Yet while he had succeeded in escaping anything more serious than popular condemnation for his part in corrupting the city government and looting the street-railway, the firm of John Argyle, Private Bankers, was considered one of the most prosperous and substantial financial institutions in the city. There were times, however, like the present when he was brutally reminded of the source of his money, and it never failed to infuriate him.

The banker's face became purple. The rush of blood to his head made his veins stand out like whip-

cord. He tried to speak, but the words stuck in his throat. Speechless, his mouth trying to splutter words that he could not articulate, he advanced threateningly on his rebellious offspring. At last, with an effort, he regained his speech. Wrathfully he exploded:

"Don't dare give me the lie, sir—don't dare give me the lie! Or I'll have you booted out of the house by my butler. Don't let me have any of your insolence. I've had about enough from you to-day. Get out of here—get out, I say!"

His face livid, scarcely able to articulate from pent-up, ungovernable, unreasoning passion, he advanced toward his son, his hand clenched in threatening gesture, when suddenly the door opened and a young girl appeared on the threshold.

CHAPTER II

FOR a moment she stood irresolute, as if uncertain whether to enter the room, afraid that she might be intruding on some private tête-à-tête. She did not seem surprised to find the two men quarreling; but a look of distress came over her face as her quick glance went from father to son, and she noticed the elder man's angry demeanor. Somewhat ashamed that his ward should witness his exhibition of temper, Mr. Argyle said, hastily:

"Come in, Mary dear. Are you looking for me?"

For the time being the tempest was over. Bruce gave the new-comer a nod of welcome and shrugged his shoulders significantly while Mr. Argyle, now that his favorite had appeared on the scene, changed his mood completely. The hard, stern features relaxed; his face broke into a smile. At a glance it was easy to see that this young girl, comparatively a stranger in his household, had done what his own flesh and blood had never succeeded in doing. She had won her way into the heart of this eccentric, querulous old man.

It had not been an easy task, but Mary Masuret was no ordinary girl. Fair and slender, she barely looked her twenty years, although the serious, thoughtful expression of her face in repose made her at times appear older. Regular, almost classic fea-

tures, soulful, innocent-looking eyes, and a sensitive mouth, delicately chiseled, imparted a spiritual look to her face. She was not one of those modern, sophisticated women whose voluptuous charms and easy morals seldom fail to attract men. Rather was she one of those old-fashioned, timid, shrinking natures who, by a strange contradiction, make a strong appeal even with men who have few illusions left regarding the romantic side of life.

So long had she been an inmate of John Argyle's home that she had almost forgotten that she had known any other. Only on rare occasions when her adopted father alluded to the tragedy of her childhood did she realize that she was not really of his blood. It was a sad story, and one that she preferred to forget. Mr. Argyle and her father had been friends from boyhood. Unlike most men's early friendships that die out as each goes his way in life, this friendship had lasted. It was, indeed, the one redeeming feature in the life of John Argyle, a hard and not too scrupulous business man, that he had always felt a warm place in his heart for the old friend who had shared with him the uncertainties and trials of his early manhood. The Civil War broke out, and both were drafted to the same regiment, which saw real fighting at Vicksburg and Shenandoah. Together they shared the hardships and dangers of the long campaign until on the conclusion of peace each resumed mercantile pursuits with varying success. Argyle married and prospered. Masuret also made a venture in the matrimonial market, but with less success. His wife, after giving birth to a daughter, left him, to run away

with another man; and Masuret, deserted, died an embittered, miserable man. On his death-bed he sent for Argyle and confided to his old comrade his little daughter. That was how Mary became a member of the Argyle household.

The banker advanced toward the young girl and, taking her hand in his, patted it caressingly:

"Do you want me, dear?" he asked.

"Yes, dad. I've been looking for you everywhere. I heard your voices in here. There's a man downstairs. I don't know who it is. He wouldn't give his name. He said he knew you were at home and insisted on seeing you."

Argyle, Sr., looked puzzled. Who could it be? He never transacted business away from his office, and he had always discouraged strangers calling. In fact, it was seldom that he was home at this time of day.

"It isn't Mr. Hurley, is it? He could hardly have gotten up so quickly."

Mary shook her head.

"Oh no. I know Mr. Hurley. This man is a stranger. I never saw him before."

The banker frowned. Going quickly toward the door, with an expression on his face as much as to say that he would make quick work of the intruder, he said:

"I'll go and see what he wants. If Mr. Hurley comes let him wait for me in here."

The next moment the library doors had closed behind the master of the house, and the young couple were alone.

When she was sure that the old gentleman was

out of earshot the young girl turned eagerly to Bruce. Anxiously she asked:

"What's the matter?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, the usual thing. We can't agree, and never could. This constant quarreling must stop. It's getting on my nerves. I'm going away—"

"Going away?"

"Yes, going away—"

"Why? What's happened?"

For a moment Bruce made no answer. How could he tell this girl, the companion of the happiest days of his boyhood, that she was the innocent cause of his being disinherited? Yet know she must, some day. If he did not tell her, others would. Finally he blurted out:

"He's furious because of my marriage to Nan, and he's about to make a new will leaving everything to you."

The young girl flushed and then turned pale. It made her happy that her future was assured, yet it pained her to think that another had been robbed of what she was to enjoy. Gently she said:

"I don't want what is rightly yours, Bruce, and I shall tell your father so."

The youth shrugged his shoulders.

"It would do no good. Once he has made up his mind, all the forces this side of hell could not persuade him to change it."

"But surely matters are not so bad as that. In time he'll forget and you'll both be friends again."

The young man shook his head. Bitterly he replied:

"No, Mary. This is the very end. I'm going away, and I sincerely hope I shall never see him again. I'm sorry to leave you, of course, but Nan and I have our own lives to live. I cannot remain here and retain my self-respect. I shall come to the house once more—possibly to-night—to again insist on his giving me some of the money he has in trust for me. That will be the very last time I shall see him on earth. Even if he were willing to acknowledge my wife and be to me what a father should be to his son, it would make no difference in my opinion of him. I can never forget how he has treated me all these years. The very sight of him fills me with repulsion. I hate him! I detest him!"

"Hush, Bruce dear. You must not talk that way. After all, he is your father. He—"

Fiercely the young man interrupted her:

"No, he's not. I deny it. It's impossible that such a man as that is responsible for my being. We haven't a single thought, a single impulse in common. He hasn't a decent instinct. He is well aware that I know where he got all his money. That's why he hates me. It's all tainted. I don't want any of it. I'm heartily ashamed of him, and always have been. Many a time I've wished he were dead. Sometimes I have felt like strangling him myself—"

The young girl raised her hand in quick protest.

"Bruce!"

He gave a hollow laugh.

"Oh, don't be afraid. I've no desire to go to the electric chair yet."

The young girl was silent. Her mind was all confused by the news of this unexpected windfall.

Much as she regretted this rupture between father and son, she could not help realizing what the old man's decision meant to her. It seemed too good to be true that she, the poor, friendless orphan, was to inherit the wealth of John Argyle. Presently she asked:

"Are you sure about his changing the will? I knew I was mentioned for a certain sum, but that I should get all seems incredible."

The youth nodded. Bitterly he replied:

"It's sure enough. He telephoned Mr. Hurley just now. The lawyer may be here any minute. He said he'd come right up. Hurley's just the right kind for the governor. If ever there was a rascal who deserved the hangman's noose, it's certainly he."

The girl nodded.

"I never liked Mr. Hurley myself. There's something sleek and crafty about him. Do you think he will draw the new will to-day?"

"Oh, they may draft it to-day; but then it has to be properly drawn up. I don't suppose it will be ready for signature before to-morrow night, and when my father once signs it that is the end. He is very dogged and obstinate. He'll never change it."

The young girl shook her head protestingly. Starting forward and grasping the young man's hand, she exclaimed, warmly:

"No, Bruce—I will not permit it. No matter what your father does I will see to it that your rights are protected. What do you care whether you inherit by will or receive it from me? Do you think for a moment that I could enjoy his money, knowing

I had deprived you of it? No matter what your father's will says, you will get it just the same."

Making a quick bound forward, Bruce clasped her in his strong arms, and his voice trembled with emotion as he said:

"I knew you'd say that, Mary. You always were a brick. But I refuse—absolutely. I cannot, I will not accept your sacrifice. I don't want his money. I won't touch a penny of it. Money that's inherited seldom brings good luck, anyhow. It's ruined many a good man. It sha'n't ruin me. I'll go out into the world and make my own money, and I assure you that it will be cleaner than his. It wasn't the money I cared about so much as the unfair way in which he has treated me."

Mary was silent. Her heart was beating fast. Thoughts crowded fast one upon the other in her brain. She the mistress of the Argyle millions! It was too good to be true. She was sorry, of course, for Bruce; but, after all, her conscience was clear. She was not the cause of the rupture. On the contrary, she had done everything possible to restore amicable relations. If the banker did not leave his fortune to her, it would probably go to some hospital. She would be less than human if this totally unexpected news did not thrill her and fill her with a strange sensation of exaltation. Then a sudden dread seized her. Suppose her benefactor should again change his mind, and take a sudden dislike to her as he had done to his son. With such a peculiar man everything was possible.

Both were silent, each distrustful of the other, stirred by different emotions, vaguely antagonistic,

the one's heart full of hate and bitterness at the cruel injustice done him, the other elated by the unexpected good fortune which had befallen her. Finally Mary broke the silence:

"So you are determined to go away?"

He nodded.

"Yes; as soon as possible. I can't go without means. He must let me have some of grandfather's money. He refused just now, but I'll come and see him again to-morrow. He must do that. I'll make him."

The young girl hesitated. Finally she said, timidly:

"Won't you let me lend you some? I have a few hundred dollars that I've saved up."

He shook his head.

"No; I wouldn't think of it. Grandfather left me that money, and father must advance me some of it. I'll make him—"

"How can you make him if he refuses?"

"I'll—"

Before the sentence could be completed there was a commotion in the outside hall. The library door was suddenly thrown open, and the housekeeper rushed in, disheveled, and in a state of considerable excitement. Startled at her appearance, they started forward.

"Whatever is the matter, Mrs. Wyatt?"

"Oh, my dear! Such perfectly dreadful things as happen nowadays! It's perfectly shocking and incredible—really outrageous! I don't know what we're coming to. The police, of course, are to blame. You know what I mean. They ought to be well

ashamed of themselves. I think I'll write a letter to the papers. There's no knowing what will happen next. We might all be kidnapped or murdered some day. A decent woman isn't safe in her own house. You know what I mean!"

The words, a volley of disconnected, incoherent phrases, came from her mouth with the velocity and force of a broadside. There was no understanding what it was about. All one heard was a mere jumble of senseless sentences uttered by a woman whose gestures and manner were as eccentric and hysterical as her speech.

Mrs. Wyatt was the kind of woman usually referred to in polite literature as of a certain age. She might be over fifty, or, again, she might be on the sunny side of forty. How she looked depended largely on the state of the weather and her stomach. She was a lady with a past, who after a stormy and chequered career with a worthless husband, who had at last succumbed to her voluble tongue, had found a haven in the home of John Argyle as housekeeper, a person rendered absolutely necessary by the advent of the adopted daughter in the banker's household.

When, at last, for sheer lack of breath she stopped her tirade, Bruce managed to make himself heard.

"What's the trouble?"

The question was perhaps unfortunate in that it was an invitation for another broadside of excited verbiage.

"Didn't you hear? Everybody's talking about it. And so close to us, too! Really, it makes one feel most uncomfortable. I sha'n't be able to sleep

all night. Such things get on one's nerves. You know what I mean?"

"But what is it?" demanded Mary.

"Our next-door neighbor has been robbed!"

"Robbed!" echoed Bruce and Mary together.

Only too glad of an opportunity to give her tongue free rein, Mrs. Wyatt again burst out:

"The Wilkinsons, next door. They went to the opera last night, and Mrs. Wilkinson wore that magnificent diamond tiara which her husband gave her recently for her silver wedding. You know the one I mean. It's perfectly regal. It's always been my dream to have a tiara like that, but they're hardly for a woman in my position. One has to have everything else in proportion. You know what I mean—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Bruce, testily; "but what about the robbery?"

Mary smiled. The housekeeper's loquaciousness was something they had all suffered from for years. There was no use hurrying her. She had to tell a story in her own way. With an indignant glance at the interrupter, Mrs. Wyatt proceeded:

"When they returned from the opera Mrs. Wilkinson took off the tiara and placed it temporarily in a jewel-box on her bureau. She distinctly remembers doing that. It was too late to open the safe. She was too sleepy to remember the combination, so she thought it would be all right there till morning. Of course, it was a most unwise thing to do. Opportunity makes the thief, as the French say. You know what I mean?"

"Yes, yes," groaned Bruce.

"Well, when she awoke in the morning the tiara

was gone. Some one had entered the bedroom while she and her husband were asleep. Only the tiara was taken. Money, rings, and other valuables were untouched. The thief, whoever he was, knew just where the tiara was to be found, and went away satisfied with that. Well he might. It's worth at least ten thousand dollars. Mrs. Wilkinson, poor woman, is completely prostrated. I think it is one of the servants, but so far the police have made no arrests. Mr. Wilkinson has sent for Kayton. He'll solve the mystery."

"Kayton!" exclaimed Mary, who had been an interested listener. "Who's he?"

"Asche Kayton, the well-known detective," explained Bruce, quickly. "He's extraordinarily clever. They call him the new Sherlock Holmes. He's never yet failed in getting his man."

"Just so," went on the housekeeper; "that's what everybody says. If Mr. Kayton can't find the thief nobody can. I only hope there's no scandal connected with the case. One never can tell. You know what I mean."

Mary did not know, and was about to ask further questions when the butler entered.

"Mr. Hurley has called, Miss, to see Mr. Argyle. He has an appointment."

Bruce gave the young girl a significant glance, but she was so busy listening to the servant that she did not notice it. Hastily Mary said:

"Show Mr. Hurley in here, Finley, and inform your master that he has arrived."

The butler withdrew, and the young girl turned to the housekeeper.

"We had better leave the library to dad and his lawyer. They have business to talk over."

Bruce extended his hand, which the young girl clasped in silence.

"You won't go before I see you again," she murmured.

He shook his head. All his life, since his earliest boyhood days, he and Mary had been chums. He did not intend to let anything come between them now. It was not her fault if she was the favorite. He wished her all the happiness and luck there was in the world. With a smile he said:

"No, I won't say good-by now. I'm coming to see father again. I'll see you to-morrow night."

CHAPTER III

"IF you'll wait a moment in here, sir, Mr. Argyle will join you immediately."

The obsequious butler made a low bow and ushered into the library a tall, heavily built man who walked with a quick, nervous stride. Dressed in a frock-coat, patent-leather shoes, drab gaiters, and silk hat, he looked prosperous, although the cut of his clothes and his manner of wearing them did not quite suggest the gentleman. Handing the servant his hat and cane, and flinging himself into an easy-chair, he said:

"Yes, I'll wait. I'm in no hurry. Your master expects me."

The butler withdrew, and Mr. James T. Hurley, counselor at law, sat down and carelessly picked up a newspaper. But it was plain that the visitor's mind was not on the printed page. His eyes, small and black like those of a ferret, wandered restlessly over the room, as if taking a mental inventory of each object it contained, and at times he raised his head and listened intently. He had a nervous trick of tapping one foot constantly on the floor, and every now and again he would turn round quickly in his chair as if expecting to find some one at his elbow.

Jim Hurley was one of those lawyers, shrewd,

crafty, unscrupulous, who enter the profession not so much to interpret and enforce the law as to evade it. No one knew much about him except that he was a self-made man and came originally from the West. Having some ability as a speaker, and unusual skill at cross-examination, he had built up a fair-sized practice. He boasted openly that he had only one ambition in life—to get rich, and to him a dirty dollar was every bit as attractive as a clean one. This philosophy had enabled him to secure remunerative work of a kind usually shunned by reputable attorneys, and brought him in close touch with a lot of very questionable people. Accused several times of sharp practice, the Bar Association on more than one occasion had threatened disciplinary proceedings, but nothing had come of it, and, quite indifferent to public opinion, he had gone his own way.

The fact that he lived in better style and spent more money than the amount of business done would seem to justify led many to believe that he enjoyed a private income, but from what source no one had the slightest idea. He was a good deal of a mystery, a reserved, secretive kind of man that no one liked. Practically his only friend was John Argyle, who was also his best client. No one could explain why the banker had taken up Hurley when there were so many more capable and reputable lawyers to be had; yet the fact remained that they were on the closest terms of intimacy, and that no one was better acquainted than Mr. Hurley with the business and family affairs of the eccentric millionaire.

The lawyer did not have long to wait. In a few

minutes the library door suddenly opened and Mr. Argyle came in. The banker lost no time in unnecessary preliminaries. Coming right to the point, he said:

"Hurley, I want to remake my will."

The document had been made and remade so often that the caller could hardly repress a smile, which, fortunately, the older man did not notice.

"Yes, sir," he answered, with a certain deference he always employed, for diplomatic reasons of his own, when addressing his wealthy client. "That's a very easy matter."

"Easy or difficult," snapped the old gentleman, "it's got to be changed. That's why I sent for you."

The lawyer sat down at the table and, taking from his pocket pencil and memorandum, waited for instructions:

"Very well, sir. What are the changes to be?"

For a moment there was no reply. The promoter paced the floor of the library in meditative silence. Suddenly he turned.

"Everything to my adopted daughter—everything, do you hear? Not a cent to my son."

The lawyer looked up in surprise.

"Nothing to Bruce?"

"No—not a cent."

Mr. Hurley shook his head.

"As your attorney, sir, I would not advise leaving him out entirely. No matter what your feelings toward him may be, it is hardly possible for a father to ignore so entirely his own flesh and blood in favor of a stranger, and the courts might sustain the plaintiff if the will were contested."

"Then what do you advise?"

"I would leave him a small sum, in trust if necessary, so that he could not say that he had been forgotten. Your will would be the stronger for it."

"Very well. We'll put aside a certain sum—say fifteen thousand dollars—to be left in trust, and from which he is to receive each week the income. At his death the principal shall go to some hospital that we will decide upon. I also name you as trustee."

Hr. Hurley bowed, and there was a crafty smile hovering about the corners of his mouth as he said:

"Thank you, sir, I am much honored. Might I suggest something in regard to the trust?"

"What is it?"

"It is usual for trustees to be put under bond by the state to insure their carrying out faithfully the provisions of the will. It is sometimes inconvenient for trustees to furnish such bonds. It would be in my case. If that were necessary I would rather decline the honor you confer on me."

The millionaire waved his hand.

"That's all right, Hurley. You and I have been doing business together too long for me not to trust you. Put in the will that no bond is required."

"Yes, sir—thank you."

The promoter watched the lawyer closely while he drafted the will. Presently he asked:

"When can you have it ready for the signature?"

"To-morrow—if agreeable to you."

The millionaire nodded.

"That suits me. Will you bring it here?"

"Yes; I don't quite know when. I may have it

ready to bring it up in the afternoon, or I may run up with it in the evening."

"Very well; I'll expect you."

Mr. Argyle rose from his chair as if he considered the interview at an end, but Mr. Hurley did not stir. The lawyer had not yet terminated all the business that had brought him there. Yet he hesitated to speak out what was on his mind. His client was not an easy man to handle. That he had often discovered to his own discomfiture. Finally he blurted out:

"Mr. Argyle, there is still a little matter I wish to talk over with you. You can probably guess what it is."

The millionaire turned and looked sharply at his caller.

"What is it, Mr. Hurley? Out with it!" Testily he added: "You know I never like to beat about the bush."

Thus encouraged, the lawyer spoke up. Boldly he said:

"We need more money."

The promoter's face darkened. If there was anything that would put John Argyle in a bad humor, it was the mention of money or the apprehension that he was about to be approached for a loan. A man of a suspicious nature, he had a fixed idea that every one had designs against his pocket-book.

"Money?" he grumbled. "You're always wanting money. What did you do with that last two thousand? You got it only a week ago."

Mr. Hurley gave a cautious glance round as if to

make sure that the door was shut before he answered:

"It takes a lot of money to run the business. The plates have to be made and new presses purchased, all with the utmost secrecy. The specially woven paper is also very expensive. We can't expect to reap unless we sow. You're enough of a business man to know that, Mr. Argyle."

The millionaire frowned as he snapped:

"I'm not a cow to be milked, Mr. Hurley."

"If there's no milk to be had, you can't expect to get any cream, Mr. Argyle."

"I don't expect any cream," rejoined the promoter, testily. "You know perfectly well that I did not go into the affair to make money. It was the novelty of the thing that appealed to me more than anything else. It isn't often one gets a chance of getting even with the government."

The lawyer leaned forward. In a dramatic undertone he said:

"That's why you must help us. You have gone too far to draw back now."

The millionaire clenched his teeth. Doggedly he said:

"I'll go no further than I choose. I've had enough, I tell you."

"It's too late, Mr. Argyle. You are as deeply involved as the rest of us. If our plans fail for lack of capital, and the government Secret Service agents get wind of our plans, there is no telling what might happen. You don't want it known that John Argyle is a promoter of counterfeit money, do you?"

"Damn you! Shut up! Do you want my servants to hear?"

The millionaire, his face livid with rage, sprang forward, and going to the door, opened it quickly to see if any one was listening. Finding no one, and reassured, he returned to where the lawyer was sitting.

"Is this blackmail?" he demanded, contemptuously.

The lawyer's face assumed a grieved expression. Rising, he replied:

"Mr. Argyle, I had hoped that our relations in the past had been such as to make it impossible for you even to imagine such a thing of me. I asked you for money because Kreisler told me he must have it if he is to get the new notes out. He has exhausted all his own resources. I have exhausted mine. We need at least five thousand dollars."

"You won't get it!" replied the old man, doggedly. "I've had my fun, and it's cost me a pretty penny. This is where I stop for good. Your secret is safe with me, but no more money. You must find another capitalist to finance you."

Hiding his disappointment as much as he could, the lawyer bowed politely.

"Very well, Mr. Argyle. Of course, you are at liberty to retire from the partnership whenever you see fit, but one can't help wondering why you came in at all unless you were willing to see it through."

The old gentleman chuckled.

"It is simple enough. I joined your counterfeiting gang partly because I had a grudge against the government for making me pay one hundred thou-

sand dollars' fine on a shipment not properly declared, and partly because I enjoyed the fun. It was as good a way of spending my money and getting some excitement out of life as any other. I began here as a speculator in real estate in boom times. In my land deals I capitalized the future earnings of this town, as you might say. You understand, of course, a town lot has no value except what comes to it from the industry and success of the citizens of the town. I capitalized the future earning power and production of these citizens—overcapitalized it—and they are still working to pay interest on that interest, if you understand what I mean."

The lawyer, deeply interested, bowed and listened intently to this self-denunciation of a man who had no shame in confessing how he had prospered by preying on his fellow-men. Certainly this Argyle was original. It was something new in his experience to find a millionaire risking many years in state prison merely to enjoy the dubious amusement of helping in the manufacture and circulation of counterfeit money. Mr. Argyle continued:

"I put into my own pocket the public increment on huge blocks of land here—money that, in its final aspect, belonged to the city itself. Then I purchased the street-railway, another property that had no value except such as was given to it by the industrial and commercial success of the city. And I overcapitalized this, too, so as to collect at once upon the future of the city, and I sold out the stock and put that money also to my credit. In this case I had to use some of the money to purchase civic officials who would otherwise have defended their

electorate from exploitation. And in doing so I was only doing what 'promoters' make a business of doing generally in this country, you understand?"

The lawyer nodded, lost in admiration at this financial genius who so well understood the act of turning crooked politicians to his own advantage. Mr. Argyle proceeded:

"Then I went into loans—collecting upon the commercial distress which my previous operations had helped to create. I bought a controlling interest in several industrial companies, and reorganized them—sometimes by means of a sales company—in such a way that all the profits of the industries came to us and the original stockholders received only a small income on their investments. These operations are quite common. Men are performing them to-day in every city, perhaps, in the country. Why should we draw the line at promoting counterfeiting?"

Mr. Hurley smiled. The conclusion was logical enough. Looking up, he said:

"Would you mind telling me how a man in your position and of your standing came to meet Friedrick Kreisler, the famous counterfeiter?"

"That was curious," replied the banker, smiling reminiscently. "Some months ago I began to dream continually of being in a locality that was quite unfamiliar to me. I could not in my waking moments remember ever having seen it. Yet it became extraordinarily vivid in my mind from these dreams. Last month I had occasion to go to a town where we were reorganizing a gas and electric company that

wanted a new franchise to supply light and power. And one day, as I walked away from my hotel, I recognized the street. I could have told you the names on the shop signs before I came to them. I remembered particularly the gilt lettering on the plate-glass windows of a bank. And when I came to a hitching-post in front of a hardware store it was a metal figure of a negro boy holding up a tie-ring—I recollected that there should have been a man waiting for me with his hand on that post. That was the way we had met in my dreams. He was not there. I went back again in the evening, but he was not there. On the following morning, as I approached, I saw him. I went up to him and said: 'You are looking for me?'

"He replied that he was looking for some one with money who would be willing to back him in an enterprise in which there would be large returns.

"I explained that I was evidently the man he wanted, since I was a promoter by profession. He made an appointment to call on me at my hotel. And he came.

"He told me then that he was an engraver; that he had worked hard all his life, honestly, and had remained poor; that he had been reading much about modern business methods, and had concluded that he, too, had a right to use his ability to make money regardless of the honesty of the means. He pointed out to me that in selling watered stock I had really been selling a sort of counterfeit stock certificate. He argued, too, that we would do no one an injustice by issuing counterfeit money, since, as long

as it was kept in circulation, it would be worth its face value. If a man suspected it he could pass it on to some one else, just as he would with stocks. He was very convincing. Then he sent you to me. You used further arguments. You know the rest. I finally agreed to finance your scheme."

Mr. Hurley laughed loudly.

"It's been a splendid partnership. You the backer, Kreisler the engraver, I the business head. We got out as fine a ten-dollar bill as ever deceived a bank-teller, and distributed it in large quantities all over the country. It was a golden harvest."

"A harvest I didn't participate in," interrupted the millionaire, dryly. "I let you and Kreisler enjoy the profits. All I wanted was the fun."

The lawyer looked glum.

"Yes, it was good while it lasted, but money made so easily is soon spent. Kreisler has gone through every cent of his. He's living in the greatest poverty with that woman."

Mr. Argyle nodded.

"Poor Masuret's wife. She never was much good, but I was never able to see what induced her to desert her husband for a man who has spent a considerable part of his life in state prison."

Hurley shrugged his shoulders. Dryly he replied:

"It's easy to understand. Women love a dash of romance. Her life with Masuret had been exceptionally humdrum. Kreisler suddenly appeared upon the scene. He was handsome, picturesque, quite the opposite of her commonplace husband. At that time Kreisler was flush. She couldn't resist him. They have been together ever since."

"Where are they now?"

"In a bare attic on the top floor of an East Side tenement—hiding from the police. Kreisler is desperately hard up. He is working hard on his new bill. If he succeeds in putting it out we'll all be flush again. But to complete the job he must have money."

The millionaire shook his head.

"Not from me!" he said, determinedly. "I'm done with it for good."

Mr. Hurley's face darkened as he leaned forward and exclaimed:

"You can't leave us in the lurch now. We won't be trifled with like that. You must help us."

The old gentleman elevated his eyebrows.

"Must, Mr. Hurley? Surely that's a strong word to use."

"Not stronger than it should be, Mr. Argyle," rejoined the lawyer. "You ought to realize our position. Don't drive us to extremes."

The millionaire looked keenly at his companion.

"Is this a threat, Mr. Hurley?"

The lawyer laughed loudly as he rose. With renewed good humor he exclaimed:

"Threats between two such friends as you and me, Mr. Argyle! That would be ridiculous. Well, don't let us talk of money matters now. Think it over and see what you can do. Meantime I'll go back to the office and have the new will drawn up. I'll see you again to-morrow night. Good-by."

The millionaire nodded carelessly.

"Good-by. You can bring me the will to sign;

but if I were you I'd look elsewhere for funds for Kreisler."

The lawyer laughed. As he reached the door he again turned round and said:

"Think it over, Mr. Argyle; think it over. I'll see you to-morrow night."

CHAPTER IV

PRACTICAL, up-to-date methods have shattered many old-time traditions and brought about astonishing modifications in the manner of doing business in all kinds of industrial enterprises; but nowhere has the change been more apparent, more startling than in the personality and working system of the modern detective. The days of Lecocq, Gaboriau, Gorin, and other world-famous thief-catchers are past. No longer does the sleuth resort to the clumsy expedient of dyeing his hair, wearing fierce-looking whiskers, and assuming other elaborate disguises in order to shadow an unsuspecting quarry. All the picturesqueness, all the romance of the detective business has gone forever. The successful detective of to-day is essentially a shrewd, hard-headed business man. His success is the result of sound judgment, hard work, and, above all, a special aptitude for his calling. In investigating criminal cases he uses the same systematic, practical, common-sense methods as are found in the management of any important commercial house.

Another shock awaits the visitor when curiosity or necessity takes him to the headquarters of the progressive, up-to-date detective. Instead of a small, dimly lighted room, such as his vivid imagination has conjured up, with mysterious doors, sinister,

dusty-looking archives, and green-baize desk heaped high with dockets of sensational cases, he beholds spacious, comfortably furnished offices, no different from any other, with telephones ringing, a number of neat-looking female stenographers busy typewriting, clerks going in and out amid all the bustle and activity of the average place of business.

Asche Kayton, the famous detective, occupied almost an entire floor on the top of one of Broadway's newest sky-scrapers. It was a big place and cost a pretty rental; but it was none too big to handle the extraordinary amount of business done by this world-famed sleuth, whose name was a terror to criminals and a household word in every home in the country. The files alone of newspaper clippings and portraits —a veritable rogues' gallery—necessitated floor space equal to three large rooms. In the large outer reception-hall clients awaited their turn to consult the detective, and off this was a smaller office marked "Private," where the chief saw his callers. Other offices were for the use of the clerical staff and operatives.

The general furnishings did not differ in any marked degree from other business offices of the same size. About the only thing that might suggest to the visitor the nature of the business done were a number of frames on the walls containing finger-prints carefully labeled and dated, and copies of police handbills giving descriptions of criminals wanted.

If the offices were always busy, and the clerks and operatives kept going at high pressure, there was little wonder at it. Every one who had a knotty

problem to unravel, a difficult clue to follow, a mystery to solve, brought it to Asche Kayton. "Never-Fail Kayton" people called him, and it was a reputation that had been built up gradually during over twenty years of continued success, mostly in the employ of the Secret Service of the United States. The son of a tradesman, Kayton was trained for a mercantile career, but he had little taste for business, showing greater preference for police work. Soon he became intensely interested in the detection of crime. When only twenty years of age he made a close study of detective methods, and, convinced that they were all wrong and obsolete, devised a system of his own, the efficacy of which he soon found an opportunity to put to a practical test. He was successful in a number of difficult cases which had completely baffled the local police, and before long every one was talking about Kayton's wonderful skill in tracking criminals and solving mysterious murder cases. The government heard of his success and offered him inducements to join the Secret Service. In this new position he made a brilliant record. For years his skill and ingenuity were pitted against the cleverest and most dangerous counterfeiters and forgers in the country. He proved himself more than a match for them all, tracking them from city to city, upsetting their most carefully laid plans, and finally landing them behind prison bars. He made possible the prosecution of the graft scandals in New York City; he ferreted out the truth about the land frauds in Florida and Michigan; he waged a merciless war on all police corruptionists, railroad thieves, and bribe-taking legislators. When

the entire country was horrified by the dynamite outrages, Asche Kayton went on the trail of the dynamiters, and did not rest until he had captured them all and secured their conviction.

In personal appearance no one could possibly suggest a detective less. A man still in the early forties, curly-haired and muscular, jovial and good-humored, he looked more like a genial and prosperous business man than a professional detector of crime. There was always a good-natured expression on his face, and his manner was easy and friendly. He liked to chat and exchange jokes with whoever he met, yet the close observer did not fail to notice something hard and unyielding in those mild, gray eyes, now twinkling with fun. The lines about the mouth were firm and determined, and every now and then there came into his face the expression of a man who never lets up and cannot be shaken off once he has hit what he thinks the right trail.

His life had often been in danger; but he laughed at all threats, believing that every criminal is at heart a coward. He did not know what the word fear meant, yet for all that he did not fail to take due precautions. He was always armed with a revolver, and he kept a good lookout. He was never off his guard, and he had the unusual gift of being able to size up a man from the distance. The only way to have killed him would have been to attack him from the rear.

When complimented on his success and questioned about his system, he replied that it was very simple. "The practice of my profession," he said, "like the practice of law or medicine, is the practice of com-

mon sense. The detective's success is the result of straight thinking, good judgment, hard work, and an aptitude for the business. There are no mysteries—every criminal leaves a trail behind him. It is the detective's ability to see and follow traces so slight that others do not perceive that counts for much in his success. The average clever criminal is overtrained. In trying to avoid detection, he becomes abnormally cautious, and so betrays himself. In one of the land-fraud investigations I found one of the men lying. By every apparent indication the statement was truthful. I felt he was lying. He overtrained himself—he told a little too much. The next day I told him just where he lied, and the whole truth came out. The detective, to be a success in his profession, must not recognize any obstacles. If you come to a stone wall there must be a way around. Frame up a situation that will get you around or over." Once, after Asche Kayton had succeeded in making an important arrest, a newspaper printed his portrait with the heading: "THE MAN WHO NEVER FAILED." The underworld laughed in derision, but only for a time. The crooks soon learned to respect and fear this remarkable man who held the astonishing record of never having failed in any case that he had undertaken.

This morning the Kayton offices were busier than usual. The typewriting machines were rattling along at full speed, several telephone-bells were ringing simultaneously, there was a perfect pandemonium of slamming doors and voices. A young clean-shaven man, of slight physique, but with an unusually intelligent face and alert eye, entered

quickly from Mr. Kayton's room, the glass door of which was marked "Private," and addressed a heavily built man who was seated at one of the desks, glancing over some papers.

"Seen anything of the chief yet, Nash?"

The man looked up.

"Not yet, Joe. I'm waiting to give him my dope on that Wilkinson diamond job. It's a cuckoo, take it from me—as fishy a yarn as ever I was handed out."

Dressed in a faded blue-serge suit with tan waistcoat, striped shirt, yellow buttoned shoes, a Masonic watch-fob dangling from his pocket, and a huge paste diamond in a tan-colored tie, the speaker looked the typical cheap drummer. No one, at a casual glance, would have taken him for one of the most highly trained, shrewdest sleuths on Kayton's staff. This style of get-up—commonplace and vulgar—was part of Kayton's system. He considered the old style of costume for detectives obsolete and all wrong. He insisted that if his men wore heavy shoes, a black tie, and sombrero hat they could be spotted a mile away, while if they dressed like an every-day street loafer they passed unnoticed in the crowd.

Joe grinned. With an air of superiority he chuckled:

"Say, weren't you onto that bunch? Directly I heard of the robbery, I knew it was phony. The old woman's a bridge fiend, and has lost heavily on the ponies. The only way she could raise money was to sell her diamonds, and make a holler. Why didn't you ask me?"

Nash shook his mustache ruefully.

"You think you're smart, don't you? I guess you'd still be out fine-combing the pawn-shops if the chief hadn't put you wise. He worked it out all right. Say, ain't he a wonder?"

Joe's eyes twinkled, and an expressive whistle escaped from between his thin lips as he exclaimed enthusiastically:

"Is he? Well, I guess. He's the slickest thing you ever saw. I sometimes wonder if he's human. Nash, I do believe that Kayton can see through a brick wall and read what people think even when they refuse to open their mouths. I pity any crook once Kayton gets on his trail. He might as well make up his mind at once to take his medicine like a man."

Joe Manning was nothing if not enthusiastic. Although the youngest sleuth on Kayton's staff, he had earned quick promotion, displaying such nerve and sagacity in all emergencies that the chief finally awarded him the supreme prize for merit—making him his personal assistant. This meant not only more salary—a consideration Joe cared little about—but the one thing the young man most craved for. It became his duty to be in constant attendance on his employer. When Kayton himself went out on a case, Joe always accompanied him; when the chief had office work to transact the faithful Joe mounted guard at a desk close by, and one might as well have tried to break into the Bank of England as get to Asche Kayton, until Joe gave permission.

"What's keeping him this morning?" growled Nash, chafing at being kept indoors on such a fine day.

"Search me!" rejoined Joe, carelessly. Turning to another man who at that moment entered the office, he called out: "Say, Leishman, did the chief expect to be late this morning?"

Augustus Leishman, manager of the Kayton office, might well have been mistaken for a clergyman, so clean-shaven and benevolent-looking was he in appearance. A man of about fifty, he was bald, lean-cheeked, thin-lipped, and wore a low collar and black string tie. He was suave and discreet to a degree, and these two qualities, indispensable in a man of his position, had, in fact, won him his present position. He smiled blandly as he replied:

"No, Mr. Kayton said nothing to me. I suppose he'll be here any minute."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the gate in the outside corridor slammed loudly. The next instant the office door was thrown open and a tall, energetic-looking man entered like a whirlwind. It was Asche Kayton, the world's most famous detective.

Nodding good-humoredly to his waiting subordinates, the chief crossed the outer office with a stride and, pushing open the door marked "Private," went in, closely followed by Joe.

The room where Kayton received his clients was large and well lighted. It had two doors: one leading to the office of Mr. Leishman, the manager, the other giving access to the outer office and the hall. Near this latter door was a small desk used by Joe, not necessarily for real work, but it sometimes suited Kayton's purpose to have a witness present when talking with visitors; and his assistant, while pre-

tending to be very busy at his little desk in the corner, never failed to keep his ears open. The chief's desk, in the center of the room, looked businesslike. It was covered with papers and letter-files, and wire baskets heaped high with opened letters and telegrams. Two telephones, one long-distance, the other for the office, were within reach, and a system of electric push-buttons communicated with the operatives and every other department. In case of trouble with some cantankerous individual Kayton only had to push a button to get immediate help. Conspicuous among the general litter on the desk, and significant of the nature of the business done by the office, were a pair of steel handcuffs, while over Joe's desk were several framed finger-prints.

"Good morning, sir," smiled the assistant.

"Morning, Joe. How goes it?"

The young man grinned.

"We were beginning to worry about you, Chief. One never knows what you're up against. Since those dynamiters threatened your life we're really scared. Nash has the report on the Wilkinson diamond case for you."

Kayton chuckled.

"Wilkinson case! Why do we want to be wasting our talent on such child's play as that? We'll soon be after bigger game, Joe."

There was something in the chief's voice that made the young man look up quickly. Kayton's mouth twitched and his eyes sparkled as they always did when something exciting was at hand. It always reminded Joe of the quivering of a high-bred horse about to start upon a race, only in this case the

horse was a detective and the prey a criminal trying to evade justice. Something very important had happened, that was evident. Nothing less could have disturbed his superior's equanimity.

"Yes, sir?" he said, discreetly.

It was a tradition in Kayton's office that no one should ask a direct question.

The chief flung himself down in his swivel-chair at the desk and glanced hurriedly over the pile of telegrams. For a moment there was complete silence broken only by the ticking of the clock and the distant cries from the street of newspaper venders hoarsely calling "Extra!"

Kayton suddenly pricked up his ears.

"Joe," he exclaimed, "do you hear that?"

The young man listened. Skeptically he replied: "You mean the 'extra' they're calling? Usual fake, I wager."

Kayton shook his head.

"Not this time, Joe. Where have you been these two days? The papers have been full of it. There's been a big murder. It has made a tremendous sensation in this town."

Joe looked up, an interested expression on his face.

"A murder, sir? I hadn't heard of it. I've been out of town for a week. What murder?"

"Old man Argyle. He was found strangled and shot to death in his library!"

"You don't mean John Argyle, the banker?"

Kayton nodded.

"Yes, I do. He was killed at three o'clock Friday morning."

Joe gave an expressive whistle.

"That's a corker, all right! Robbery?"

"No; not a thing was touched, although the room was full of valuables. That's the queer part of it. Looks like a family affair, which makes it all the more sensational. The police, as usual, are all at sea. No arrests have been made, although the scent's forty-eight hours old."

"Any one in the family under suspicion? What was the motive?"

Kayton sat with compressed lips, thinking hard.

"That's just it. First, find the motive. In this case there are two. I'm not officially connected with the case, but I've found out that much. Two persons gained a distinct advantage in the case of the old gentleman's death. One was his son Bruce, with whom he recently had a violent quarrel, and whom he disinherited. The other was his adopted daughter Mary Masuret, recently made sole beneficiary under a new will—"

"You suspect the girl?"

Kayton shook his head.

"The old man put up a stiff fight. There is evidence of a desperate struggle. A slender, delicate girl could hardly have done it."

"Then the son—"

"He is more likely."

"Perhaps a servant—"

Kayton made no answer. Taking a cigar from a box at his elbow, he lit it deliberately. After a few puffs he turned to his assistant and said, good-humoredly:

"Say, Joe, we should worry? It's up to Police

Headquarters. Let them hustle. These things interest me, because it's in my line of business, but really it's none of my funeral."

The younger man shook his head sagely.

"Not yet, maybe, but it soon will be. The police will do nothing, and they'll come to you."

As he spoke the telephone-bell rang. Kayton picked the receiver up from his desk and put it to his ear.

"Hello. Yes, this is Mr. Kayton—Asche Kayton —yes. Mr. Bruce Argyle—oh yes! Police done nothing. I'm not surprised. Could I take up the case? Yes—I suppose I could. Let me see, what's your address? Very well, I'll be right over. Oh, by the way, Mr. Argyle, will you please see that nothing is disturbed in the room till I come. Yes—that's the idea. It's my way of doing business. I'll be right over. Good-by."

The chief put down the receiver and turned to Joe with a look of triumph.

"What did I tell you? The police are pin-heads. They've done nothing. The son wants me to take it. Maybe a clever bluff on his part. Anyhow, here goes!" Rising from his seat, he exclaimed: "Come, Joe, get your hat and bring your finger-print layout along. It's up to us to solve the biggest murder case on record!"

CHAPTER V

THE blow had fallen upon the Argyle home with the force and suddenness of a thunderbolt, and the servants and other members of the household were still under the first shock of terror and consternation. Without warning, grim tragedy had stalked through the house. The inmates had gone as usual peacefully to bed, only to be confronted the following morning with a scene of horror.

It was Mr. Finley, the butler, who first missed his master, and a half-witted boy named Andy, who helped in the kitchen, who discovered him lying dead in the library. Mr. Finley, who spoke with a slight Irish brogue and wore the long mutton-chop whiskers which tradition demands of every self-respecting majordomo, had been in Mr. Argyle's service for over thirty years. He was now nearly sixty, but carried himself with dignity, as became a domestic who had served only in the best houses. He was a trusted retainer even when Bruce was born, and as the years rolled by he had diplomatically made himself so indispensable to his aged employer that his position in the household was more that of a friend than a servant. Conscious of his own importance, he had bitterly resented the addition of Mrs. Wyatt to the family circle, yet conceded that the adoption of a daughter called for

special services, feminine in kind, which he himself was incompetent to perform. He had grown fond of Miss Mary, who had a way of winning her way in every one's affections, but his relations with the housekeeper were always painfully strained. Fights occurred almost every day, and if there was a lull in the hostilities the most that could be said was that each side had called a temporary truce. Jealous of all authority save that of his master, Mr. Finley assumed airs of the greatest importance, and bullied the under-servants until they were more afraid of him than of Mr. Argyle.

The discovery of the midnight tragedy came upon the butler as a crushing, overwhelming blow, first because he had lost a good and liberal master, secondly because it wounded his vanity that such a dreadful crime should have been possible with him close at hand to prevent it. It was his custom to knock at his master's door every morning at eight o'clock. He did so as usual that morning, but got no reply. He knocked again and, still receiving no response, feared that Mr. Argyle might be ill, and decided to enter. To his surprise, he found the room empty and the bed intact, showing that it had not been slept in. Anxiety gave way quickly to genuine alarm. Not knowing what to think or do, he proceeded to do the very thing he should not have done. He hurried to Miss Mary's room and said he feared something serious had happened to his master. The young lady turned pale—he recalled that distinctly afterward—and it seemed to him that her voice trembled when she told him that he had better go and look through the house. Not for a moment

expecting to find what awaited him—if he had he would never have gone—he went down-stairs and was suddenly startled by being confronted by Andy, who, his face white as chalk, his hair disheveled, and eyes protruding, gasped:

"Quick—in there—he's dead!"

Not realizing for the moment what the lad was saying, but with a vague feeling of uneasiness, he groped his way into the darkened library and, more by force of habit than anything else, threw open one of the shutters of the big bay-window. This done, he was stepping back when his foot caught in something lying on the floor, and he nearly stumbled. He glanced down and fell back in fright. There on his back, fully dressed, but his hair disheveled, his clothes in disorder, his face livid, tongue protruding, was his master. All about were chairs and bric-à-brac overturned, rugs disarranged as if there had been a brief, desperate struggle.

The terrified butler did not stop to investigate further, but ran breathlessly back to Miss Mary's room to tell her what he had seen. Never would he forget the expression on the young girl's face. If she herself had committed the deed, she could not have looked more agitated. Her face went white as death. He thought she was going to faint. "In the library!" she exclaimed. How did she know it was the library? He had not said so. He noticed, too, that her eyes were red and swollen from weeping, that she was fully dressed, and that her bed, too, was undisturbed. He remembered all these details very clearly afterward, and, realizing they might prove damaging to his young mistress, tried to forget them,

but the police have such a way of asking questions that it's very difficult to hide anything.

It was absurd, of course, to think that a young girl had anything to do with it. What motive could she possibly have? Mr. Argyle had always been kind to her, no matter what he had been to his son and his servants. Could it be Andy himself or that footman they discharged a month ago, when they discovered he had a prison record? Certainly he was a good-for-nothing rascal and capable of anything. Yet it could not be he, for his motive would have been robbery, and apparently nothing had been touched. Even the big diamond ring on the dead man's finger had not been taken. Was it Mr. Bruce? He did not love his father any too much. Many an angry scene between them had nearly ended in blows. But Mr. Bruce could easily prove an alibi. Had not he himself let his young master out at ten o'clock? Mr. Argyle was still alive long after that.

Of all murder cases one ever heard this certainly was the most mysterious. No wonder the police and detectives were entirely at sea. Meantime nothing must be touched in the library. Those were the orders of Mr. Kayton, the celebrated detective, who now had charge of the case. Kayton or no Kayton, they must air the room and let a little daylight in; so with a lordly gesture Mr. Finley summoned Topp, the footman, to help him. But Topp, a thin, clean-shaven cockney, and always a miserable coward, did not relish the job of going so near the scene of the crime, and it required considerable pushing and prodding from Mr. Finley, who

brought up the rear, to make him enter the room. The butler, with a pleasing sense of his own importance, dragged the reluctant Topp behind him. Sharply he said:

"Ye're to draw the curtains an' air the room, d'ye hear?"

The shivering footman cast a terrified glance around the dark room. Still lagging behind, he asked, fearfully:

"Do I do it alone, Mr. Finley? Or do I 'ave 'elp?"

The butler looked at his subordinate with the utmost contempt.

"What ails ye, Topp?"

The man snickered nervously.

"The same thing that's hailin' you, maybe." Again drawing back, he exclaimed, defiantly: "I hain't goin' alone into the bloomin' tomb."

Mr. Finley shrugged his shoulders, and his face took on a distressed expression, as it always did when his subordinates showed any disposition to question his authority. He did not feel any too comfortable himself, but took care not to show it. Evidently, in this case he himself would have to set a good example. Stroking his side whiskers to gain courage, he pushed the footman aside and scornfully he said:

"Aw, ye're worse than the wimmin! What's to hurt ye here? Come on wit' ye."

Making a brave plunge into the room, he went directly toward the large bay-window with the object of throwing up the shades. Topp, his eyes still averted, followed, treading gingerly on tiptoe.

It was so dark that it was only with the greatest difficulty that the butler found his way. Suddenly he stumbled over a chair, which went crashing to the ground. The terrified Topp gave a little scream.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, his hair on end.

"It's only a chair."

Topp breathed more freely. Apologetically he said:

"I hain't the sort of bloke who sticks at a thing; but I don't fancy a room where 'orrors 'ave 'appened."

The butler rolled up the whites of his eyes. Piously he exclaimed:

"Mister Argyle was as good a master as ivver lived. Why sh'u'd ye be afeard o' the place where he died?"

The footman made a grimace.

"'E may 'ave been a good man, Mr. Finley—but 'e died an unnatural death."

Arrived at the recess, the butler lost no further time in argument, but threw open the windows, letting in a flood of light. Losing patience with the footman's cowardice, he said, sharply:

"Ye may be called upon to do worse things than open the windies on the scene of a murder—God willin'—"

As he spoke the door from the hall opened, and Bruce entered. The footman did not see who it was. He only heard the sound of footsteps, and, convinced that the dead man had come back to life, he started back in horror.

"That's 'im!" he exclaimed, and before the indignant Mr. Finley could stop him he bolted for the door and dashed out.

Bruce looked after the footman with surprise. Turning to the butler, he asked:

"What's the matter with the fellow?"

Mr. Finley shrugged his shoulders.

"It's his nerves, sir. He's got a fear o' the room."

He began to pick up the fallen chairs; but Bruce, who was glancing uncomfortably round the room, quickly stopped him with a gesture.

"Don't touch anything until Mr. Kayton comes."

"The detective, sir?"

"Yes, the detective."

Having satisfied himself that everything had been left as it should be, the young man went back to the door and spoke to some one waiting outside in the hall.

"Are you there, Nan?"

"Yes," came the rejoinder.

"Will you come in here, please?"

In the doorway appeared an attractive, fashionably dressed young woman who paused apprehensively on the threshold, as if afraid to advance farther. Was she maid or matron? It was impossible to guess at first glance. About twenty years old, she was *petite* and dainty, one of those women who know how to dress in good taste on a slender income, and who look well no matter what they have on. Halting near the door, she peered timorously around. In an awe-stricken whisper she asked:

"What are you doing in here, Bruce?"

"Mr. Kayton has just 'phoned me to see that nothing is touched in this room until he comes."

"What time will the detective be here, sir?" inquired the butler, respectfully.

The young man took out his watch.

"Any time now," he replied.

The butler hurriedly went out to make ready for the expected caller, and the young woman, taking courage, advanced farther into the room. In a hushed, frightened voice she asked:

"More detectives coming?"

"Yes; I have engaged Asche Kayton. He takes charge this morning."

"Do you think he can do anything at this late hour?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"Do anything? He's the cleverest detective in the country. If *he* can't, nobody can. If only we'd sent for him at first we wouldn't have had the thing all muddled up the way it is now—with suspicion on Mary—and me—and everybody else."

The young woman shook her head. Dubiously she said:

"Bruce, I don't believe they'll ever find out who killed your father. It will remain one of those mysteries that are never solved."

The son made no reply. This horror had come upon them all so suddenly that he had not yet had time to think. All he knew was that many things needed explanation. Certainly, robbery had not been the motive, because nothing had been touched; and if it was not robbery, what was the incentive? Who was most interested in his father's death? People had begun to whisper things. All kinds of damaging, libelous, outrageous rumors were circu-

lating and finding credence in the newspapers. Even he, the dead man's son, was not above suspicion. He felt that. People looked distrustfully at him in the street. He heard whispers as he passed. Conscious of his own innocence, he did not care. He could stand the slanderous gossip. He would be at hand whenever they wanted him. But that poor girl, his foster-sister! It was horrible to think that her name, too, had been dragged in. Slowly he answered:

"If Kayton finds out enough to clear Mary, that's all I ask."

The young wife approached him and laid a hand gently on his shoulder. Sympathetically she exclaimed:

"Oh, Bruce dear, nobody believes Mary or you had anything to do with it!"

"Nobody that knows us, of course! But what about the people that read the newspapers and *don't* know us? How is Mary?"

Nan hesitated a moment before she answered.

"She's so strange, Bruce. She hasn't said a thing about your father since I came. She simply won't speak of it."

"That's not surprising. Mary never talks about the things that are way down deep with her."

"And your father liked her for that, didn't he?"

The young man nodded.

"Yes, he could quarrel with me, but he couldn't ever get a rise out of Mary. She'd just simply keep quiet—and get her own way with him. He never forgave me for refusing to marry her, but he never quarreled with her for refusing me."

Nan smiled.

"I'm glad she refused," she said, gently.

Bruce put his arm around her.

"She understood about you, Nan, from the first—and she was doing everything she could to help us with him. But you know how obstinate he was!" Bitterly he added: "Now he's dead we're not much better than we were before. There's no doubt that he executed the new will. Indeed, Mr. Hurley has told me as much."

Lovingly, the young wife put her arms around his neck.

"Don't worry, Bruce dear. I prefer it that way. At least you'll know it isn't your money I care for, but you yourself. You'll make your own money. You'll be a success; I feel you will."

The young man embraced her in silence. They were so engrossed that they did not notice the door open and some one enter until they heard a discreet cough behind them. Turning quickly, they saw Mrs. Wyatt.

The housekeeper tripped lightly toward them. Her manner gushing and fussy, she said, apologetically:

"Excuse me. Good morning, Mr. Bruce. I didn't know you were here. Finley tells me that Mr. Kayton, the detective, is coming."

The young man nodded.

"Yes; I want you to give him all the assistance in your power. Nothing must be touched here. He has—"

But she did not let him finish. In her explosive fashion she burst out:

"I think you're perfectly right. I mean to say those police detectives aren't getting anywhere. We don't know any more than we did at first!"

"We soon will, though," replied Bruce, confidently. "This man Kayton is a perfect wonder. He'll find some clue that all the police detectives have missed." Turning to his wife, he added hastily: "I've got to go now, Nan. The lawyers have sent for me. But I'll be right back."

Kissing the young woman lightly on the cheek, he hurried out of the room.

For a few moments after his departure the two women sat and looked at each other without speaking, Nan glad enough to be alone with her thoughts, realizing painfully as she did that it was she who had been the cause of the tragedy. But it was a physical impossibility for Mrs. Wyatt to remain quiet. The terrible crime had sobered her to some extent, but her tongue could not be curbed for any great length of time. Chafing under the long silence, she could finally not stand it any longer. Suddenly she burst out:

"This house has been my home for twenty years —ever since Mary was taken into the family—but it never will be again. I mean to say I never could feel at home in a house where there'd been a murder. I suppose I'm peculiar, but it doesn't make any difference whether the room is opened or locked up, I can't go by without feeling it. Do you know what I mean? I suppose Mary'll sell the place. Have you heard her say anything about it?"

Not wishing to encourage the housekeeper to discuss family matters, the young woman answered

only in monosyllables. Shaking her head she said:

"Oh no."

But the voluble Mrs. Wyatt was not to be put off so easily.

"Well, what do you think of that will?"

"I think it is very unjust," replied Nan, decisively.

The housekeeper shook her head in sympathy.

"Yes, Mr. Argyle certainly was a very strange man. I don't want to say anything disagreeable about the dead, but it's hard to understand how a man could cut his son off without a cent and leave a fortune to a girl who's in no way related to him.

Nan shook her head. Confidently she said:

"I don't believe Mary will let that will stand."

The housekeeper shrugged her shoulders. Her lips tightened, and her voice sounded harsh and bitter as she said:

"I'd say that, too, if I didn't know human nature as well as I do. Mary's a dear girl, but money changes people."

"Not Mary," interrupted Nan, warmly.

"I mean to say, take a perfectly fair-minded person, like Mary, generous to a fault, and you never can tell what money will bring out in them—do you know what I mean?"

Before the young wife could answer there was a knock at the door and the butler entered. With an air of offended dignity, he said, pompously:

"Mrs. Wyatt, that detective has come."

The housekeeper rose, an expression of annoyance on her face. More detectives? For the last forty-eight hours the house had been overrun with them.

Really, they got on a woman's nerves with all their impudent questions. What good were the police? They were no closer to the murderer than they were at first, and this man Asche Kayton would probably be just as stupid as all the rest. Still, if the family wished it, it must be done. Resignedly she said:

"Mr. Kayton—oh—well—I suppose you'd better bring him right in here, Finley."

"Very well, ma'am," snapped the butler, viciously.

He retired, and Nan went hastily toward the door.

"Hadn't we better go?" she said.

The housekeeper nodded, and also rose.

"Yes—yes. I don't want to see him. I mean to say I've seen detectives enough during the past forty-eight hours to last me for the rest of my life. They're such horrid, inquisitive people. You know what I mean."

The two women hastily left the room, closing the door behind them. A minute later the butler re-entered, followed by Mr. Kayton and Joe.

CHAPTER VI

THE detective's first step was to go to the windows and throw up all the blinds. Then he stood still, in contemplative silence, his experienced eye going carefully over every detail of the room, noting the position of each piece of bric-à-brac and furniture.

Joe, meantime, approached Mr. Finley, who stood by, an expression of offended dignity on his sleek face, resenting this invasion of the premises and meddling by men who were not even regular police officers, but outsiders who did it only for money. As if there was any chance of success with such a low, mercenary class of people as that!

"I suppose the police and detectives from headquarters have mauled everything about? Or is this the way the furniture was found?" asked Joe, sharply.

The butler eyed the speaker scornfully, taking him in from head to foot. Haughtily he replied:

"Nothing was disturbed on this side. Everything was as you see it." Pointing to the right, he added: "But on this side everything was helter-skelter just as it is now."

Joe gave his chief a questioning glance.

"I wonder how that happened?"

The butler chuckled. He had his opinion of

these so-called detectives. Sarcastically he retorted:

"If you knew that and had your supper, you could go to bed."

The assistant smiled grimly. Turning to the butler, he asked, dryly:

"You're Irish, ain't you?"

Kayton, who had been watching them with some amusement, laughed outright. Approvingly he exclaimed:

"Joe, you're a great detective!" Addressing Mr. Finley, he added: "Tell me, my man, has anything been touched here since the night of the murder?"

Offended at the shocking familiarity with which he was addressed, the butler shook his head haughtily.

"I can't tell you," he replied, sullenly.

Kayton looked at the man searchingly. Was he hiding anything? Did he know more than he was willing to admit? He would soon find out. One of his favorite methods was a process of elimination. Each member of the household was under suspicion and subject to cross-examination until he was satisfied that he or she had nothing to do with the case. Sharply he said:

"The body was lying on this side of the room?"

"That's as maybe," replied Finley, doggedly.

Joe nudged him in the ribs. Warningly he said:

"Say, you'd better open up. You may get the chair in this case yourself yet."

The butler glared at the interrupter. Thoroughly aroused and reckless of what he said, he retorted, savagely:

"I'll will you me wits, then. You'll be needin' 'em."

Kayton drew his assistant aside.

"I'll fix him," he whispered. "What's his name?"

"Finley."

The chief leisurely removed his coat, as if about to get busy. Then, turning to his aid, he said, carelessly:

"Joe, go and bring Mr. Finley in here. He's the man to help us."

"That's Mr. Finley," replied the assistant, pointing to the butler.

Kayton turned to the butler as if greatly surprised.

"Are you Mr. Finley?"

"I am," answered the butler, drawing himself up.

The detective laughed. Good-humoredly he exclaimed:

"Why didn't you tell us that at first? I am well aware of your confidential relations with the household and your late master, Mr. Finley. The family has always spoken in the highest terms of you. I need your help. You're in a position to be of great assistance to us."

Flattered more by the detective's manner than his actual words, the butler's bosom swelled with pride. More affably he said:

"Well, sir, I'll tell you one thing—I want to be right candid. I don't take much stock in detectives."

Kayton nodded approval.

"You're quite right," he laughed. "They're a bad lot." Quickly he added: "What have you got against them in particular?"

The butler frowned. Indignantly he said:

"Men with so little intelligence as to try and put suspicion on such a young girl as Miss Mary—as innocent and harmless a young woman as ever lived. I've no patience with such scoundrels. They'll get no assistance from me in that kind of work, or from any other honest man."

Kayton nodded.

"You're quite right, Mr. Finley. The innocent must be cleared and the guilty brought to justice. That's why we're here. Now tell us the facts as you know them. You found the body?"

The butler shook his head.

"Yes—sir—that is, I missed the master. I knocked at his door in the usual way, but he did not answer. I was alarmed and opened the door, thinking he was ill or something. When I saw the bed hadn't been slept in I was still more alarmed. No sign of the master. I went to Miss Mary and told her—"

Kayton interrupted him.

"Oh, you told Miss Masuret?"

"Yes, sir."

"What time was it?"

"About eight o'clock, sir."

"Was Miss Masuret up?"

"Yes—sir. She came to the door fully dressed."

"Fully dressed."

"Yes, sir."

"Was it usual for Miss Masuret to be dressed so early?"

"No, sir. I've never known her to be up so early before."

"What did she say?"

"She was very nervous. Her face was white, and she was all agitated. I thought she was ill."

Kayton paused and made quick mental notes. The adopted daughter, chief beneficiary under the will, was agitated on being informed of the murder. That was only natural. But she was fully dressed at a very unusual hour of the morning. This certainly would bear investigating further. Turning again to the butler, he went on:

"Oh, you found her so pale and agitated that you thought she was ill, and she was completely dressed at eight o'clock in the morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had her bed been slept in?"

"I did not notice, sir."

"What did she say?"

"She didn't know what to say. I went downstairs and was just wondering what to do when suddenly the man, Andy, ran into me. 'He's dead!' he cried. 'Stark dead on the floor in there!' 'Who's dead?' says I. 'Mr. Argyle,' says he—"

"Who's Andy?" demanded Kayton.

"Dan Scully's boy."

"How long has he been here?"

"Time out of mind—nearly as long as myself."

"What does he do?"

"He makes himself useful where I tell him to. He's a simple soul."

"Send for him," commanded Kayton, sharply. While Finley was ringing the bell he inquired: "Who else was in the house?"

"Myself; Miss Mary; the girl, Kitty; Topp, the

footman; and the cook. Mrs. Wyatt was away; Mr. Bruce, Mr. Argyle's son, was here for dinner that night, but went away early."

Kayton looked up quickly.

"Did you see him go?" he demanded.

"I did not. By eleven o'clock I made fast for the night—with Mr. Argyle sittin' in here and Miss Mary in her room up-stairs."

Before the detective could put further questions the door opened and the housemaid entered the room in answer to the bell. Addressing the butler, she said:

"Did you ring for me?"

"Yes, Kitty. Bring Andy here."

"Yes, sir."

She left the room, and Finley turned to the detective. Shaking his head sagely, he said:

"How them that did it got in, that's the thing for you to learn, sir. But when they had done it, they went out the hall through the front door, for in the morning I found the small chain off and the bolt drawn, and let me tell you this, sir—there's nothin' but wickedness in this doubt of Miss Mary."

While he was speaking a shock of red hair was thrust inside the door as if the owner were afraid to let more of himself be seen. But with a peremptory gesture the butler motioned him to advance.

"Andy, come here!"

The youth entered, dragging his unwilling feet along with a timid, frightened shuffle. He was tall, ungainly, and loose-limbed, and had on a blue-denim workman's blouse. His face and hands were grimy, his mouth wide open in a grimace of terror. His eyes,

dilated with fear, were fixed on the detective. Spurred by more threatening gestures from Mr. Finley, he advanced slowly into the room, unconsciously making an effort to conceal his tatters and improve his appearance. Suddenly he came to a halt and waited. Kayton, who had been watching the lad narrowly, carefully noting every fleeting change of expression, turned to Finley, but his eyes were still fixed on the shivering lad as he asked:

"Andy came first to you?"

The butler nodded.

"He did, and it was I that told Miss Mary. When we found he was dead she got Mr. Bruce here straightaway and the doctors, and they the police, and from that it began—trouble without end. Reporters, photographers—"

Kayton turned abruptly to the trembling boy.

"Andy, did you hear anything in the night?"

Paralyzed by fright, the lad gave no answer. Kayton repeated the question.

"Andy, did you hear anything in the night?"

Looking up in an awe-stricken way, he shook his head. Slowly he stammered:

"No—no."

"Trust him to hear anything," laughed the butler, derisively.

His eyes still riveted on the youth, Kayton demanded:

"What time did you go to bed?"

Fidgeting about with his feet, Andy looked helplessly at Mr. Finley, who finally had pity on him and came to the rescue.

"Bless you, sir—he don't know. He don't live by

the clock. He goes to bed by habit and gets up by habit."

Kayton made another careful survey around the room, and then turned to the butler.

"Is the furniture as it is now pretty much as you found it?"

Andy, shaking like an aspen leaf and anxious to escape, nervously took hold of the butler by the arm. Shaking him off, Mr. Finley exclaimed, impatiently:

"Go along with you!" Answering the detective's question, he said: "Yes, sir; all wheeled about every which way. Nothin's as it should be. He made a hard fight to defend himself—God help us!—before they put death on him."

"Where was the body?"

The butler pointed to where Joe was standing.

"There, where your man is." Indicating another corner, he added: "And the pistol was yonder."

"Was he lying on his back?"

The butler nodded.

"On his back, to one side, with the table-cloth clutched in his hand." Turning to the still trembling helper, he said: "Andy, lay yourself down there and show the officer. Go on! Go on!"

Frightened out of his wits, yet still more afraid to disobey, the lad started to get down on the floor when suddenly he sprang up again with a grimace.

"Not me," he cried; "there's bad luck in it!"

Kayton made an impatient gesture of dismissal. He had seen enough to convince him they were only wasting time examining such a witness as that.

"Never mind," he said; "you can go now. That's all for the present."

The youth did not need telling twice. With a skip and a hop he was out of the room.

Kayton now went to the table, and, taking up one end of the cloth, he said:

"You say this cloth was dragged from the table?"

"About half-way, sir—and some books on top of him."

"When was this cover put back?"

"That's hard to say, sir."

"It may be very important."

The butler scratched his head, as if trying to refreshen his memory. Hesitatingly he said:

"Well, I remember I was straightening up the room when one of the doctors came in. He stopped me till the coroner should come; but I had already put back the cloth and those three books."

"Has it been touched since?"

"It has not—not so much as dusted."

Kayton nodded approval. Then, consulting a little memorandum which he carried in the palm of his hand, he said:

"I want to see the footman, Mr. Finley."

The butler shrugged his shoulders.

"He'll be unwillin' to come, sir."

Kayton looked at him sternly. Firmly and decisively he said:

"Finley, I want to see the footman."

"Very good, sir."

The butler went out with alacrity and closed the door behind him. Directly he had disappeared Kayton made a quick gesture to his assistant.

"Come, Joe; let's see if we've got anything on the table."

Hurrying to the table, they carefully lifted off the cloth.

"Be careful of that cloth!" warned the chief. "Have you got your powder?"

Joe nodded, and, taking a tube of powder, sprinkled it carefully all over the top of the table. When the surface was completely covered Kayton stooped and blew the powder all off. Then, quickly, he leaned over, magnifying-glass in hand, to see if there were any marks. Shaking his head, he said:

"Nothing there—try over here. Looks like a cold trail. Hello! Here's something!"

Examining closely with the glass the upper end of the table, he exclaimed:

"A woman has been holding on here with both her hands."

"It might have been Miss Masuret," whispered Joe.

"She was sitting down. It's very plain. Here are her eight finger-prints. Get busy, Joe! See if you can get the thumbs under the edge there."

"All right, governor."

Quickly the assistant went to work to secure the finger-prints, arranging a pocket camera to take photographs when the powder had brought out the marks on the table with sufficient clearness. He was still busy at work, while his superior was examining the furniture at the other end of the room, when suddenly the library door opened and Mrs. Wyatt entered.

Considerably nettled that the detectives should have proceeded with the investigation without even taking the trouble to consult her, the housekeeper

was not in the most amiable mood. Surveying the detective from head to foot, she said, haughtily:

"Mr. Kayton, I presume?"

"Yes," he replied, laconically.

Tossing up her head, she went on:

"I suppose you know who I am?"

He looked at her inquiringly, but without displaying any great interest.

Piqued, she said, grandly:

"I'm Mrs. Wyatt."

He nodded carelessly.

"Oh yes. Good morning, Mrs. Wyatt."

She was nonplussed for the moment, not knowing whether to be angry or not. Finally she said, with a forced smile:

"I trust you found everything as you wanted it?"

"Oh yes," he replied, laconically.

"Do you need anything else?"

"No, thank you."

"Is there anything I can do?"

He thought for a moment.

"Well—"

With an affected smirk meant to be amiable, she said:

"Mr. Bruce ought to be here soon. He said he'd come right back, and it's almost eleven now. Is there anything you want to ask me?"

"Yes, there is."

He nodded gravely, fixing his eyes on her in a manner that frightened her. Startled, she exclaimed:

"I wasn't here when it happened, you know! I mean to say, I don't know any more about it than

you do; but I suppose you know a great deal. Oh, I'm so disappointed. You don't look at all like a detective."

He smiled, and, coming down to where she was standing, offered her a chair.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you. Some of us try to look like gentlemen. Won't you be seated, Mrs. Wyatt? When did Mr. Argyle adopt Miss Masuret?"

"Mary? Why, I don't know. She was just a little thing. I don't believe she was more than six, but I really don't know much about it. I mean to say, I wasn't there. It was in San Francisco, you know. Mr. Argyle and Mr. Masuret were the dearest friends."

"What was Mr. Masuret's first name?"

"I think it was James. Yes, I know it was. It was James."

"What became of her mother?"

"Oh, she died there."

"In San Francisco?"

"Yes. I really don't know much about her. Her maiden name was Marsh—Nellie Marsh."

"Nellie Marsh, eh?" exclaimed Kayton, in a tone that caused Joe to look up. At a gesture from his employer the young man took out a memorandum and made a hasty note of the name.

Mrs. Wyatt smiled amiably as she went on gushingly:

"That's all I can tell you. I really don't know how I remember that. As I said, I've never heard much about the mother, except that there was some scandal about her."

Kayton looked up quickly.

"Scandal? In what way?"

"I really can't say. Mr. Argyle never could be persuaded to talk about her. It was entirely on account of Mr. Masuret that he became interested in Mary."

"Entirely?"

"Oh yes—entirely."

The detective was silent for a moment; then abruptly he asked:

"How long have you lived here?"

"Oh, many, many years—"

"As long as that?" he smiled.

Hastily checking herself, she stammered in some confusion:

"I mean to say it must be sixteen—ever since my husband died. I'm a widow—do you know what I mean? I'm a very old friend of the family, and when Mr. Argyle adopted Mary he felt that he must have a woman in the house."

Kayton bowed as if he was in complete sympathy with the idea. Suddenly he demanded:

"Tell me, Mrs. Wyatt, how were the relations between Mr. Argyle and his son?"

Forgetting for the moment who she was speaking to, she exclaimed:

"Now, doctor—I beg your pardon."

"Beg the doctor's," he smiled.

She laughed lightly as she rattled on.

"I mean to say, Mr. Kayton—that's something I don't like to talk about. It was the only thing we had to make us unhappy. Do you know what I mean? Bruce and his father never seemed to agree

about anything. Why, the last time they quarreled he cut him off and left everything to Mary. We didn't any of us know it till yesterday. It's too bad to have Bruce left without anything. He's an artist, you know, and of course artists can't make anything with their art. I mean to say, if they don't have money they never get anywhere, unless they're famous or something, and that doesn't happen very often—do you know what I mean? That night, Mary tells us, there had been a reconciliation. It's too bad it came too late to have him fix over his will. Mr. Hurley says he executed it the very night he was killed."

"Mr. Hurley?" exclaimed the detective.

"Yes; Mr. Hurley's his lawyer."

"Oh yes, yes, of course."

Again Mr. Kayton took a mental note. Mr. Hurley saw the banker the very evening he was murdered and had a talk with him about drawing up a new will. He knew this man Hurley by name. His reputation was not of the best, but perhaps he would be able to throw some light on the old man's attitude toward his son and the feelings of Bruce toward his father. Decidedly, Mr. Hurley was worth an interview.

Mrs. Wyatt, gratified at last that she had succeeded in saying something that seemed to interest the detective, continued:

"Mr. Hurley will be here himself presently. I telephoned him and told him that Bruce and the executors had put the case in your hands, and that you were here. You know things were getting terrible. The newspapers—why, they don't seem to care

at all what they say—do you know what I mean? Mary's prostrated. Why, they might as well accuse me of murder as Mary! Of course, *I'm* positive it was burglars—do you know what I mean?"

The detective rose and paced the floor. With a shade of impatience in his voice he said:

"Yes, yes; I'd like to see Miss Masuret."

Taking the hint, Mrs. Wyatt moved nervously toward the door. As she reached it she turned and said:

"Oh—well—I don't know—I mean to say—if you *want to*, I suppose you must. I'll go right to her now."

Turning on her heel, she tripped out of the room as lightly as she had come in.

CHAPTER VII

NEVER-FAIL KAYTON rubbed his hands with satisfaction. So far, so good. Everything was going as well as he could wish. He had examined several of the servants to whom suspicion might attach, and was thoroughly convinced of their innocence. The process of elimination had begun. He had learned at least two things that might lead to important clues: one was that Miss Masuret did not go to bed on the night of the murder; the other that Mr. Hurley, the lawyer, had an interview with the banker that evening and consulted him about changing his will. Still another find, and perhaps the most important, were the prints of a woman's hands on the table in the room where the murder took place. Who was that woman? If he could only find that woman who was in the room and saw the old man murdered, he would be very close to the murderer.

Going over to his assistant, who was still busy getting the prints from the table, he said hastily:

"Joe, when you've finished, go and get the finger-prints of all the women who were in the house the night of the murder. Don't miss anybody."

"Very well, gov'nor."

As he spoke Mr. Finley re-entered the room, followed by the footman.

"Here is Topp, sir," said the butler, deferentially.

The detective looked the man quickly over from head to foot. Satisfied with his scrutiny, he turned to his assistant and said quietly:

"Get his prints, Joe." Then, turning suddenly on the trembling lackey, he demanded sharply:

"Now, my man—tell the truth—how did you come to be mixed up in this murder?"

The little cockney turned pale. He knew it—they were going to charge him with killing his master. Panic-stricken, he exclaimed:

"S' 'elp me Gawd, I 'ad no 'and in it!"

Kayton smiled grimly. Shrugging his shoulders, he replied, skeptically:

"That remains to be seen. Come—out with it. What were you doing that night?"

Topp looked at his interlocutor aghast.

"Me, sir? I'm a man of hearly hours an' quiet 'abits. I 'ad read my hevenin' paiper an' was in me bed by 'alf past ten."

"Did you hear anything in the night?"

The man shook his head.

"Naw. I go to bed to sleep. It's not me plaice to be listenin' an' spyin'."

The detective shrugged his shoulders. Sarcastically he said:

"You're one of those very heavy sleepers, I suppose?"

"No, sir. I'm a very light sleeper. You kin wake me with a whisper."

"How did it happen, then, that you slept all through a murder?" demanded Kayton, sternly.

"I didn't saiy I slept through a murder," was the shrewd answer.

"You say you didn't hear anything. What *did* you do?"

"I 'ad an uneasy night, and at three in the mornin' I got up an' opened me window."

"Did you notice anything unusual?"

"I can't saiy that it was unusual," replied the man, cautiously.

"No? What was it?"

The footman hesitated.

"It's not my plaice—"

The little cockney was keeping something back. That was very evident. Sharply the detective exclaimed:

"Come! No beating about the bush! It will be all the worse for you. What was it?"

Mr. Finley also had noticed the footman's hesitation. Giving his subordinate a prod in the ribs, he whispered:

"What's the matter with ye, man? Out with it."

But Topp still hesitated. He did know something, but had he not always been taught that silence is golden? He might only get into trouble if he told what he had seen. Finally, with reluctance, he said:

"I saw a light."

Kayton looked up quickly.

"Where?" he demanded.

The footman made no answer, but turned appealingly to the butler, as if for protection. He got little sympathy in that quarter. Eying him sternly, Mr. Finley said:

"Go on! Don't be so foolish. Out with it! Tell the officer all you know."

Topp gave vent to a deep sigh. Hesitatingly he said:

"Well, sir, since you will 'ave it, it was in the room below me."

Quickly the detective turned to the butler.

"What room is that, Finley?"

It was the butler's turn now to hesitate. He had been a faithful servant in the Argyle home for over a quarter of a century. It was hard that after all these years he should be asked to testify against one who had always been kind to him. Reluctantly he answered:

"Why, sir, that's Miss Mary's room; but—"

"Miss Masuret's room!" exclaimed Kayton, in surprise. Turning quickly to the footman, he went on: "What did you do?"

"I went back to bed, an' I was there when they waikened me."

The detective made a gesture of dismissal.

"That's all for the present. You may go."

The footman hastily left the room; and Kayton, turning to the butler, said, quietly:

"Now, get the maid Kitty."

Mr. Finley went toward the door to summon the girl. Before he reached it he halted and turned round. There was an anxious expression on his face as he said, hesitatingly:

"I might say, sir, I think it would be nothin' unusual for Miss Mary to have a light in her room."

Kayton made no reply; and the butler, with a sigh, went to the door and called the girl in.

As Kitty entered, frightened and apprehensive like all the other servants, he said, in a tragic undertone which did not tend to reassure her:

"You're wanted by the detective, girl."

"What for?" she asked, with a shiver.

Kayton, who was getting tired of all this cross-examination, dropped into a chair. Without even glancing in the direction of the maid, he turned to the butler and said, curtly:

"Bring the cook in also."

Mr. Finley shrugged his shoulders, and an amused expression came over his face. It was really funny to see these detectives thinking they could order a cook around as if she were any ordinary person. What did the cook care for detectives? Tactfully he said:

"Ye'll be wastin' yer time there, sir. Mrs. Beauregard, the cook, is the only intelligent member of the household that sleeps below-stairs, an' she's been pestered by the police till she's got a bit fussy."

"Never mind; I'll have to see her," said Kayton, determinedly.

Mr. Finley shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well, sir, I'll bring her—I'll bring her, only don't blame me if she's a bit cantankerous."

He went out, closing the door of the library behind him. Kayton looked at the maid, who smiled bashfully. She had never seen a detective before, and had no idea they were so good-looking. Modulating his voice, he said, kindly:

"Come here, my girl. So you're Kitty, are you?"

She advanced shyly toward him. Timidly, and with a slight courtesy, she answered:

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hear anything the night of the murder?"

There was a moment's hesitation as she replied:

"N-no, sir."

"Nothing whatever?" he persisted.

"The rain—" she stammered.

"What time was it?" he asked abruptly.

She gave him a furtive look as if wondering how much she could tell with safety.

"A quarter past one."

"You got up and lit the gas to look at the clock?"

The girl stared at him in amazement, frightened that he knew so much. Quickly she answered:

"No, sir. I got up because I'd—I'd left a window open down-stairs."

"Did you go down to close it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you pass Miss Masuret's room?"

Again she hesitated.

"Yes."

"Was there a light under the door?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, reluctantly, and avoiding the detective's steady gaze.

"Did you speak to Miss Masuret?"

"Yes, sir. Her maid had gone away for the night, and I thought perhaps I could do something for her."

"Was she ill?"

"She had a headache."

"She said so?"

"Yes, sir. She said she had a headache and couldn't sleep."

"Did you do anything for her?"

The girl hesitated a moment before she answered:

"No, sir."

"Didn't you go into her room?"

The maid shook her head.

"No, sir; she wouldn't let me."

"Why not?"

"She said she'd be all right."

Kayton looked at her keenly. All this was damaging evidence of the highest importance. Changing abruptly the line of questioning, he demanded suddenly:

"Did you come down to this floor?"

"No; I went right back to bed."

Before the detective could ask anything further there was a commotion outside the library door, and a shrill, angry voice was heard exclaiming:

"Gawd sakes! I'd like to see the man, detective or no detective, as thinks he can boss me!"

The next moment there bounced into the room a burly negress of the typical Southern-mammy type. She had a fat, kindly face, and her woolly hair was partially gray. Uncorseted, her enormous bust stood forth in vast folds of wabbly fat, and her fat, perspiring face shone like a freshly polished stove. Evidently just from the kitchen, she was nevertheless neatly dressed in blue calico, with a large checkered apron and a white handkerchief tied round her head. She appeared to be laboring under great mental excitement, for directly she caught sight of Joe she turned to Mr. Finley, who had followed in a vain attempt to quiet her, and demanded:

"Is dis de man?"

The butler shook his head and pointed to the chief.

"No; this is Mr. Kayton."

Not in the least awed, the negress advanced aggressively toward the detective.

"Ah, you ah de gen'l'man as wants to see me?"

Kayton, an amused expression on his face, looked the new-comer over for a moment and then turned to Kitty.

"That's all. You can go."

Overjoyed to get away, the maid beat a hasty retreat, and the detective turned to the negress:

"Ah! You are Mrs. Beauregard. Yes; I want to see you."

She did not wait to hear what he had to see her about, but at once burst forth explosively:

"Yes, I am, suh; an' I's heah to say I don' wan' to see you! I's seen 'nuff o' you detectionaries, and I obshave ebry—ebry time anything bad occuhs in dis yere wohld, yo' allus try to put it on to us colored folks."

He allowed her free rein, amused at her angry gestures. When finally she stopped for want of breath he asked, quietly:

"How long have you lived here, Mrs. Beauregard?"

"How long has I libed heah? Lawd o' love, I allus libed heah. I libed heah since Miss Mary was a li'l' child. Why man, I libed heah mos' a hunded yeahs." Indignantly she added: "What business 's it on yohs how long I libed heah?"

He laughed good-humoredly.

"Well, if you've lived here as long as that you must have been deeply attached to Mr. Argyle."

She stared at her interrogator for a moment, as if not quite understanding the drift of the question. Then, as if suspecting a trap, she burst out:

"Don' yo' put no scandal on me! I wa'n' no moh 'tached to Mr. Argyle dan Mr. Argyle war 'tached to me. Dere wa'n't nobody else in dis yeah town could cook foh him!"

Kayton merely smiled as he went on, calmly:

"And I suppose you were just as attached to Miss Masuret?"

Again flaring up, she exclaimed, angrily:

"Don' yo' figgah you kin make me say nuffin' 'gainst Miss Mary. Come 'round yeah tryin' to wohk up mo' lies against dat chil' fo' de newspapehs. Yo—yo—don't get no help from me!"

Kayton laughed as he said, mockingly:

"I don't suppose you would know anything about anything, anyway."

Incensed that he should take her for an ignoramus, she fell easily into the trap. Wrathfully she replied:

"I—I—I don' know nuffin', eh? I don' know nuffin', eh? I—I know 'nuff to know she didn't done nuffin'!"

The detective quickly altered his tactics. There had been enough fooling. It was time to attend to business. Going closer to the negress and looking her straight in the face, he said, sternly:

"Young Mr. Argyle has engaged me to find out the truth. If you know anything that will help to clear Miss Masuret, you had better tell it."

Somewhat intimidated by his commanding tone, the negress looked helplessly at the butler.

"Is dis yeah man lyin' to me?" she faltered.

Mr. Finley shrugged his shoulders as he replied, blandly:

"There's tricks in all trades, Mrs. Beauregard, but

I'm thinkin' the truth can't hurt Miss Mary—so whativver ye know ye'd best tell to him."

"Come, come!" repeated Kayton. "What do you know?"

The negress shifted uneasily about on her enormous flat feet and rolled up the whites of her eyes as she replied:

"I know Miss Mary hadn' nuffin' to do wit' that yeah 'sassination, 'cause she was on d' uppeh flo' all de time."

"How do you know that?" demanded the detective, quickly.

"'Cause I done see her dere."

"Where were you?"

"I was crawlin' up dem kitchen staihs, an' dehe was a light up dehe, an' I look up an' I see her."

"What brought you up-stairs?"

"Well, suh, I was wakened up by a pow'ful row in de middle o' dat yeah night. 'Peahed like somebody must 'ave fell down dem yeah staihs. I was scahed corpse-cold, an' I wait dehe, an' listen an' listen—an' I don' heah nuffin' mo'. Den I reckon I bettah 'vestigate dat commotion. An' I done did it."

"Did you speak to Miss Masuret?"

"No, suh; I wasn't speakin'; I was jes' lookin'. 'Peahs like I couldn't get mah breaf in time to speak 'fore Miss Mary went back inteh her room an' shut de do'. Den I calc'late I mus 've dreamed some o' dat yehe noise, so I goes back to bed, an' didn't heah nuffin' mo' till mohnin'. An' if you'll excuse me, Mistah Policeman, I'd like to go back to my bakin'. Yo' all 'peahs to fohget dat folks has got to eat."

Kayton laughed and turned on his heel.

"All right, general; go back to your commissariat."

The woman stared at him in blank amazement.

"What's dat—what's dat you call me?"

"All right, Mrs. Beauregard. If I want you again I'll send for you."

She shook her head defiantly.

"Yo' don' see no moh o' dis yeah colored lady. Come roun' heah askin' me all dese fool questions I get so—so mingled I don' know what I is. I hopes to de Lawd yo' all clear out o' dis yeah house, an' leave dis yeah fambly in peace."

At the door she turned round as if about to deliver another broadside, but the butler gave her a push, and she disappeared. After she had gone Kayton hastily scribbled a few notes in his memorandum-book and then turned to the butler. Quietly he said:

"Finley, I want to see Miss Masuret."

The old servant started, and a look of genuine distress came over his face.

"Miss Mary, sir? Is it really necessary. . . . Couldn't ye leave her alone, sir?"

Kayton stamped the floor impatiently. Peremptorily he said:

"No; go at once and tell her that I want to see her."

"Very well, sir," replied the man, resignedly. "I will call Miss Masuret."

Without another word the butler left the room, closing the door carefully behind him.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN the door had closed on the butler Kayton turned to his assistant with a grim smile on his otherwise impassive face.

"Nothing so far, Joe."

"No, sir. I guess it's going to be no cinch."

Kayton did not answer, but, dropping into a chair near the fireplace, sat staring silently at the blazing logs on the hearth as if trying to read in the glowing embers the solution of the Argyle mystery. So far so good, but all he had learned amounted to practically nothing. He was really no further advanced than when he began this wearisome cross-examining of dull-witted menials. Evidently, none of the servants were implicated. Each had told a straightforward story, and there was no good reason for doubting any one's word. It was tiring, nerve-racking work having to pump answers out of the fools, yet it must be done. Experience had taught him that no witness is too humble or unimportant not to be of some value. While innocent themselves, they often unconsciously furnished a clue when trying to shield the real culprits.

For example, the statements made by the footman, the maid, and the cook were all highly damaging to Miss Masuret. There seemed to be no question that she was up and dressed in the middle of the night

about the time when the crime was committed; and in the morning, when informed of the tragedy, her manner was nervous and agitated. In her case, too, there was a strong motive. She was chief beneficiary under a will which had just been executed. It was to her interest to get the old man out of the way before he had a chance to regret his action and remake his will. But was it credible that a young woman delicately nurtured, charming and amiable as every one declared her to be, would attempt such a deed? Was she present in the room while another, an accomplice, did the old man to death? Were those finger-prints on the polished surface of the table her finger-prints? All this must be cleared up. Then there was the son. There was also a motive in his case. He knew of the new will disinheriting him. He knew exactly when it was to be executed. Had he come to the house with the idea of killing his father before he could sign it? The butler said he saw the youth go away, and long after his departure the old man was alive; but were they sure that Bruce did not return at a late hour and get into the house unobserved? He had a latch-key. Nothing would have been easier. Then there was Mr. Hurley, the family lawyer. He was one of the last to see the banker alive. What had passed between him and his aged client? All these threads must be closely followed up. But he must go slowly. There was nothing to be gained in acting hastily. He would not even attempt to put direct questions to either Miss Masuret or Bruce. A better plan was to let them think he did not even suspect them and to watch them closely. Meantime, he would get hold

of Hurley and learn from him just what the relations between the murdered man and his son and adopted daughter were. It might also be a good idea to go through the old man's bureau drawers. Possibly they might contain some clue.

Jumping up, he went over to the big desk to examine the contents of the pigeonholes, while Joe, on the other side of the room, picked up the debris scattered all over the floor and arranged everything systematically on the window-seat.

Suddenly Kayton stooped down and exclaimed:

"Hello! Here's a cigar-band!" Examining it closely, he added: "I wonder what brand the old man smoked."

Joe pointed to the cigar-boxes on the desk.

"I guess those were his."

Quickly Kayton opened one of the boxes and, taking out a cigar, compared the bands. Shaking his head, he said:

"They're not alike. It may have been an old cigar the old man had in his pocket. It may also have been on the cigar of the man who killed him. In any case, it's worth keeping."

Slipping it into his waistcoat pocket, he went on with the work of ransacking the pigeonholes. For a few minutes nothing was said, both men working hard, when all at once Kayton uttered an exclamation of surprise. He had been examining the contents of several of the envelopes he found in one of the inner drawers of the desk when suddenly he came across a brand-new hundred-dollar bill."

"Well, that's damned funny!"

"What?" said Joe, looking up.

"Here's a new hundred-dollar bill in an envelope."

"In the desk?"

"Yes, and the drawer looks as if it had been pretty well searched, too."

Joe nodded.

"Yes; the police probably went through them all. Queer about the bill. The old man must have intended mailing it to somebody."

Kayton shook his head as if puzzled.

"That's hardly likely."

"I wonder why he didn't."

Kayton laughed outright. Mockingly he exclaimed:

"If you knew that, and had your supper, you could go to bed, Joe."

The young man pointed to the debris he had collected.

"I've got all this stuff laid out, governor."

The chief nodded approvingly.

"Better start with the finger-prints now, Joe. Get all the servants—both hands."

As he spoke the library door opened and the butler appeared. Kayton hastily put the one-hundred-dollar banknote in an envelope, which he thrust in his pocket. Looking up, he asked, carelessly:

"What is it, Finley?"

"Mr. Hurley's here, sir."

"Is Miss Masuret coming?"

"I've not had time to see, sir. I'm going to her now."

Kayton made an impatient gesture. Sharply he said:

"Don't delay any longer. Meantime ask Mr. Hurley to come in."

The butler went out, and directly his back was turned Kayton hurried over to where his assistant was still at work.

"Joe, go and send a telegram to our office in San Francisco. Put it in cipher. Make it read like this."

The assistant produced from his pocket a pencil and pad and started to write what his chief dictated.

"'*Look up Mrs. James Masuret—maiden name Nellie Marsh.*' Got that, Joe?"

"Yes, sir."

"'*Died in 'Frisco.*'" Correcting himself, he said: "You'd better make that San Francisco, Joe. They're very peevish about that out there. '*Died in San Francisco about twenty years ago.*' Get that off at once, Joe."

As he spoke he extinguished the lamp on the table.

"Is she the girl's mother?" demanded the young man.

"Yes. I want to know all I can about that scandal. I believe this thing happened through the girl some way or other."

Before Joe could question any further the door opened, and Mr. Hurley entered.

The lawyer was carefully dressed as usual, with a flower in the buttonhole of his long frock-coat, an elaborate tie with an expensive pin, and white gaiters. No one could mistake his profession. He had about him that self-confident, aggressive manner usually associated with attorneys. He did not wait

for introductions, but advanced, hand outstretched, with great cordiality.

"Good morning, Mr. Kayton. I'm Mr. Hurley, Mr. Argyle's lawyer. I'm awfully glad to meet you—heard a lot about you and all that sort of thing. I'm mighty glad that you've come in on the case. That police bunch are awful duffers. I don't doubt you'll clear the mystery up for us."

He spoke with deliberation and affectation, as if always endeavoring to impress the world with his importance. His voice had a harsh, unpleasant quality, and he had a trick of interlarding his sentences with a forced, nervous, and boisterous laugh, not unlike the neighing of a horse.

"Well, I hope so, Mr. Hurley," replied the detective, dryly.

The lawyer shook his head.

"It means time and a good deal of work, though. There are so many ways the thing might have occurred."

"As, for instance—pardon me!"

Joe, his work finished, had started to leave the room quietly. Kayton, excusing himself, went quickly forward and intercepted his assistant.

"Joe, telephone to the office that I'll not be there till twelve-thirty."

"Very well, gov'nor."

The assistant went out, leaving the two men together. Kayton apologized for the interruption.

"You were saying, Mr. Hurley—"

"I was saying there are so many ways the thing might have possibly occurred." Drawing a cigar-case from his pocket, he held it out. "Smoke?"

"No, thank you."

The lawyer turned his back a moment to get a match from the table, and, like a flash, Kayton stooped and picked up the cigar-band which Hurley had thrown from his own cigar. Then, taking from his pocket the one he found on his entrance, he quickly compared the two. But the clue, if it was one, seemed valueless. There was not the slightest similarity. Evidently, the murderer did not smoke the same cigar as Mr. Hurley.

Languidly, the lawyer dropped into an arm-chair and, leisurely crossing his knees, puffed away in silence. He appeared quite unconscious of his surroundings, but it did not escape Kayton's notice that each time he unexpectedly looked up the lawyer's small, ferrety eyes were watching him. His elbow resting on the arm of the chair, and a hand supporting his bulging brow, the attorney proceeded to theorize on the subject of the murder.

"For instance, let us suppose that the murderer obtained entry by the connivance of one of the servants. Possibly one of them carelessly lost a key, or perhaps he gained an entrance in some way that the investigation hasn't yet disclosed. The intruder is discovered by Mr. Argyle, who threatens him with a revolver, and a fatal struggle ensues."

From his chair facing the attorney Kayton listened attentively. When his *vis à vis* stopped speaking, he asked, quietly:

"How does your theory account for the fact that throughout this struggle—a struggle in which several blows were struck, judging by the marks on the face and chest of the dead man—how does your theory

account for the fact that Mr. Argyle made no outcry?"

"His cries may not have been heard?"

"Very true."

"Of course, the strong argument against the burglar theory is that nothing was stolen, although, as a matter of fact, that is a poor argument. The burglar might have been frightened away."

"You're convinced, then, that it was a burglar, and not some intimate who killed him?" said Kayton, quickly.

For a moment the lawyer seemed nonplussed. He hesitated in an embarrassed kind of way, but laughed it off boisterously as he replied:

"Well—er—er—no, I was simply airing that idea. As to the suggestion that it might have been some one of his household, some member of his family, that is, of course, absurd. There is an entire lack of motive, or, rather, a large discrepancy between the nature of the crime and the character of the only person who might have a motive."

The detective rose and paced the floor.

"Miss Masuret, for instance?" he said, quietly.

"Oh, it couldn't be Miss Masuret!" replied the lawyer, also rising. "It's quite preposterous to imagine for a moment that a girl like Miss Masuret could be involved in such an affair. Besides, how was she to know that if he died at that particular moment she would be sole heir under the will?"

"Was the fact that he was about to make a new will secret?"

The lawyer did not answer for a moment, but looked closely at the detective's face, trying to pene-

trate his inscrutable mask. Dropping again into a seat, he said, in his exasperating, self-important way:

"Well, now, Mr. Kayton, I'll tell you about that. My client had an idea that is not uncommon among millionaires. He had an almost morbid apprehension of having his heirs waiting to inherit his estate. In the last few days of his life, when he contemplated reinstating his son in his favor, he was particularly insistent on secrecy."

"Did the son know that he had been disinherited?"

"I doubt it. When I mentioned to a reporter yesterday that Mr. Argyle had made a new will at the time of his death it never for a moment occurred to me that it might harm Miss Masuret. But when newspapers come to construe motives—"

Kayton interrupted him. Abruptly he asked:

"You drew up the new will?"

"Well, now, Mr. Kayton, I'll tell you about that. The old man was greatly incensed against his son because of the latter's marriage, and he sent for me to draw a new will."

"Did you draw up the old one?"

"No, that was before my time. That was drawn up by Mead & Tolworthy."

Before the questioning could go any further, the library door opened, and Bruce entered quickly, a newspaper in his hand. His face was flushed with anger and his manner greatly excited. Nodding to the detective, he said:

"Good morning, Mr. Kayton."

"Good morning, Mr. Argyle."

"I'm awfully sorry I'm late."

Kayton smiled amicably.

"Oh, that's all right."

Not stopping to say more, the young man went straight up to his father's lawyer. Wrathfully he burst out:

"Look here, Hurley! Why did you go and give out that stuff to the newspapers, about father's changing his will, and starting them up with all this rot about Mary? Why, the papers this morning are full of the damnedest libels. Look at this: '*Argyle Murder Motive. Report that the Dead Millionaire Had Changed His Will. If He Had Lived, Miss Masuret Would Not Have Been Sole Heir.*' That's unspeakable! If Mary sees it—"

The attorney shrugged his shoulders. Loftily he replied:

"Why pay any attention to that sort of thing? You ought to be used to the methods of sensational journalism by this time."

"That's nothing to do with it. The information came from you, and a lawyer should keep such things from scandal-mongers, not furnish them with ammunition. It was bad enough when they insinuated that some of father's stock-market victims came and killed him, or maybe some fellow wanted to marry Mary for her money and had to get him out of the way; but, Hurley, you've given them just what they wanted to build on!"

The lawyer bit his lip.

"I'm very sorry, but I didn't think we had anything to conceal. You can't hide much from the newspapers. If we are going to get at the truth of this matter we need to be open and honest. Isn't that so, Mr. Kayton?"

Kayton bowed politely.

"Why, of course, Mr. Hurley."

The lawyer resumed his seat and went on with his cigar while the detective turned to the dead man's son.

"You understand, Mr. Argyle, that you are now the head of the family, and the responsibility for the success or failure of this investigation will rest largely with you. I'll have to ask for your co-operation in everything, and I'll expect that you'll consult with me before you make any move or express any opinion or do anything that has a bearing on this case."

Bruce nodded.

"Certainly; I understand that, Mr. Kayton."

"Mr. Argyle, you were the last person known to be with your father the night of the murder."

"Yes, that's true—I was. I had dinner here with Mary and him."

"Was that unusual?"

"Well, you know, I suppose, that father and I didn't get along any too well together. I broke away about a year ago when he objected to my marrying. My foster-sister, Miss Masuret, has been trying ever since to bring us together. That night my father was more amiable, and we three had a splendid time. She was as happy as could be about it—because father and I were on good terms again. She went to her room early and left us here to have a talk."

"Did your father seem worried about anything?"

"He had a telephone call that disturbed him a good deal while I was here."

"What time was that?"

"Why, about nine o'clock."

"Did he receive it himself?"

"Yes; he was called on his private wire—right there."

"What did he say?"

"I don't remember, except that he kept saying 'No' very emphatically. I concluded that it was something connected with his business affairs. Afterward he seemed preoccupied and worried. I thought he wanted to be alone so he could think it over, so I left soon after."

Changing abruptly the line of questions, the detective asked:

"Where did you sleep that night?"

"In my studio, where I live."

"How did you get there? a taxi?"

"No; I walked."

"Walked, eh? Were you caught in the rain?"

"I didn't know it rained."

"Did any one see you go into your studio?"

"Not that I know of."

"Any one drop in on you after you got home?"

"No."

"Is there any one in any of the surrounding apartments that could have seen you or your light?"

"Well, you know I just have the rear of a top floor in an old Twenty-third Street house with a skylight."

Again the detective asked, sharply:

"Didn't you hear the rain on your skylight?"

"I tell you I didn't know it rained. I go to bed early and get up as soon as there's light enough to work."

The detective was about to ask another question when suddenly Mr. Hurley, who had been an eager listener, broke in:

"Do you see anything significant in that telephone message?"

Kayton paid no attention to the interruption, but went on:

"Then you don't know of any way in which we can corroborate your statement that you left here about ten o'clock and spent the rest of the night in your studio?"

The young man shook his head.

"No—no, I don't."

"Nobody saw you, you think—nobody saw you leave here?"

For a moment the youth hesitated. Kayton noticed it, and quickly repeated the question, this time more authoritatively.

"Nobody saw you leave here?"

"No—no—"

"You didn't see Finley?"

"No," he replied, quickly, "I didn't see Finley at all."

Kayton smiled encouragingly. More amiably he said:

"Mr. Argyle, I'm sorry it's necessary to question you so closely, but if you're not going to give me your confidence it would be better for me to drop the case right here."

"Well—I—"

"As a matter of fact, who was it that you thought you saw?"

"Well, I don't want to say that I saw any one."

"You understand that it might be very important that some one should have seen you—the last person known to have been with your father the night of the murder—leave this house?"

The young man looked harassed. It was evident that this line of questioning was worrying him. Wiping the perspiration from his forehead and clearing his throat, he stammered, huskily:

"Well, I saw—"

"What did you see?"

"I thought as I was going out that I saw somebody looking over the bannister-rail."

"What made you look up at the bannister-rail?"

"I suppose I must have heard something."

Quick as a flash, the detective demanded:

"Was it Miss Masuret?"

Eagerly, he scrutinized the young man's face as he replied:

"It might have been one of the maids."

"Why didn't you speak to her?"

"I wasn't sure, and she drew back." Turning to the lawyer, he exclaimed, anxiously: "Look here, Hurley! Don't for God's sake give this to the papers. Goodness knows what they'd make of it! They'd have Mary up there, just waiting to—"

Going to the mantelpiece, Bruce stood for a moment glaring at the scandalous sheet which, in its frantic efforts to secure circulation at any cost, did not hesitate to try and fasten on an innocent girl the crime of parricide. Crushing the paper up in his hands, he threw it on the floor and stood with his head resting despondently on the mantel.

Kayton, who had watched him in silence, now approached him. Soothingly he said:

"That's nothing, my dear fellow; don't mind what they say. The truth will come out sure as the sun will rise to-morrow. The thing that strikes me as most significant in all this is the telephone message."

Mr. Hurley looked up quickly.

"What do you see significant in that?" he demanded.

"It is very simple," said the detective. "The person who called him up must have known his private telephone number. That would indicate some one who was familiar with the house. And the fact that he was disturbed by the message but said nothing of it might argue that it was some one known to him who was in a position to annoy him—possibly some old servant with whom he had confidential relations." Turning to the lawyer, he asked: "Had he any business enemies that you know of, Mr. Hurley?"

The lawyer shifted uneasily about in his chair. Puffing at his cigar furiously, he said:

"Well, I'll tell you about *that*—you understand, of course, that I've only recently been associated with Mr. Argyle, and he didn't consult me about everything, but naturally a man of his many interests must have enemies."

Bruce turned to Kayton and held out his hand. Cordially he said:

"I leave everything to you. You may not be able to find out who did this. We'll be satisfied if you only prove that Mary did not."

Kayton smiled, and there was a kindly expression about his mouth as he replied:

"The best way to prove who didn't kill your father is to prove who did kill him."

As he spoke the library door opened, and Mary appeared in obedience to the detective's summons.

CHAPTER IX

MARY MASURET had no serious claim to classic beauty, but this morning in her simple, white negligée she looked extremely girlish and attractive. She was deathly white, and, judging by the dark circles under her eyes and look of distress on her face, she was under the strain of great mental anxiety.

"Miss Masuret, I presume," said Kayton, his eyes resting with considerable interest on this young girl whose name had been so prominent in the case.

Certainly she did not look very dangerous. He thought he had seldom seen a more wholesome or more sympathetic face. It was impossible that such a sweet girl as that should have committed or connived at murder. With a courteous bow he added:

"I shall try not to inconvenience you more than is absolutely necessary."

She bowed without looking up or taking the trouble to see what kind of person this detective might be. She did not care who he was. The terrible events of the last few days had dulled her sensibilities, left her as if dazed. All she knew was that she must undergo another painful ordeal of futile questioning. Unable to find the slayer of her benefactor, the police had retaliated by putting her under all sorts of humiliating examinations, and had not stopped even at hinting at dreadful suggestions that perhaps it was

Bruce or even herself who had killed the aged millionaire. Not that she feared these veiled accusations. Her own conscience was serene. And as to Bruce, it was unthinkable that he could have done such a thing. She hoped this new police officer or detective, or whatever he might be, would have some compassion and not inflict on her more torture than was absolutely necessary.

"I am Mr. Kayton," explained the detective. "I'm here to try to clear up the murder."

Again the young girl bowed without looking up. In a low tone she murmured:

"Yes—I know."

Bruce, who had noticed her deathly pallor, came quickly forward. Anxiously he exclaimed:

"Mary, you oughtn't to be down here. You look awfully ill. It's too much for you. Please go upstairs again."

Kayton put out an authoritative hand. In a tone that did not admit of argument, he said:

"I sent for Miss Masuret."

The young man bridled up. Who was this detective that he should dare dictate to him in his own house? Curtly he said:

"You don't understand, Mr. Kayton. It's too much to ask Miss Masuret to come down here. It's too harrowing. It's the first time the room has been opened since—"

Mary shook her head.

"No, no, Bruce," she interrupted. "I don't mind. It's all right now—please."

Turning calmly to the young man, Kayton said quickly:

"I wish to speak with Miss Masuret alone, if you don't mind."

Bruce shook his head vigorously. Emphatically, he exclaimed:

"I'm not going to have her put through any third degree!"

Kayton stepped forward. Firmly he said:

"Just a moment, Mr. Argyle. Before we go any further with this investigation I want you to understand I am in charge of it."

The youth was still unconvinced and inclined to argue further, when Mr. Hurley came up and whispered:

"This is nonsense, Bruce. Mr. Kayton has got to question Miss Masuret if he's going to be of any help to her or to us. Come alone with me."

The young man turned on his heel. Shrugging his shoulders, he said:

"I suppose it's necessary, but I hate to have her go through all this. Make it as short as you can."

With a smile at his foster-sister, he took his hat and, accompanied by the lawyer, left the room.

When they were alone Kayton pointed to a chair. Politely he said:

"Please be seated, Miss Masuret."

She sat down, and the detective went to the door to see that it was properly closed, so that they could not be interrupted, and then came and took a seat near her. After a pause, during which she sat trembling for him to begin, he said:

"Miss Masuret, I can understand that this affair has been a great shock to you. You feel the loss of Mr. Argyle probably more than anybody. I

needn't tell you that I sympathize with you thoroughly, and I don't want to do or ask anything that will distress you. But a murder has been committed, and if I'm going to clear up everything and remove the suspicions that have been aroused I must have the co-operation of everybody in the house—and especially *you.*"

The young girl nodded.

"Yes, yes," she faltered; "I want to do anything I can."

"Thank you. Where were you born?"

"In San Francisco."

"Do you remember your mother?"

"No. I don't remember either my father or my mother very well. I was too young when they died."

"You have no relatives?"

"None that I ever heard of."

"There is no one who would inherit this money from you, or have any other reason for wishing you to get it?"

"Oh—no—"

"Did Mr. Argyle ever object to your intimacy with any friends?"

"Why, our life was so retired—I met hardly any one."

"No man who wished to marry you?"

"Oh no. Mr. Argyle wanted Bruce to marry me; but we couldn't — that was impossible — we were like brother and sister."

"Then you have no reasons for suspecting any one?"

"Oh no—no!"

Trembling violently, she suddenly broke into a fit of hysterical sobbing, and in an effort to overcome it, she rose hastily to her feet. Kayton rose simultaneously and confronted her. Looking at her fixedly he demanded:

"What is it—what is the matter?"

She shuddered.

"I don't know—I don't seem to be able to control myself any longer."

"Wait—wait a moment," he said, kindly.

"It's horrible," she sobbed; "it's all so horrible! It's worse down here. I can't help thinking of him —on the floor—there—"

"Won't you try to put it out of your mind? I want to help you."

She struggled to control her emotion, but the effort was beyond her power. Tearfully she said:

"Yes, I know that. I haven't been like this before. I haven't talked about it to any one—I couldn't. I've tried to keep from reading the papers—but I had to. I read them all, and they've been getting worse about me every day, until it seemed as if the whole city— How is it possible that they can say such horrible things?" Looking up at him fearfully, she asked: "Shall I have to go through a trial?"

He smiled reassuringly.

"Not if we can prevent it."

She smiled gratefully, and from that moment it seemed to her that a bond of sympathy and friendship had been established between them. This man, this stranger, spoke kindly and promised to protect her. Her fear of her interrogator had to some ex-

tent disappeared. She did not mind him nearly so much as she feared. His face was kind, his manner courteous and considerate. In fact, she rather admired this handsome detective, about whom she already knew so well by reputation. She wondered vaguely if all detectives were so good-looking and had such an amiable smile.

"Tell me," he went on, "you went to your room rather early that night—about nine-thirty?"

"Yes."

"Leaving Mr. Argyle and his son alone here?"

"Yes."

"You heard the son go?"

"Yes."

"You saw him go?"

She hesitated, and he repeated:

"You saw him go?"

"Yes."

"You were looking down from the upper hall?"

She started violently and looked at him in blank astonishment. How could he know that?

"Yes," she stammered.

"Why didn't you speak to him?" he demanded.

"I didn't want him to see me."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. It was just—instinctive. I thought afterward that I should have spoken to him."

"What did you do after he had gone?"

"I went back to my room and to bed."

"Went right to sleep?"

"Well—after a while—"

"And heard nothing more?"

"No."

The detective was silent for a few moments. Then, suddenly, he demanded:

"Why couldn't Bruce have stayed here that night instead of going away in a storm like that?"

Not realizing the importance of her answer, she replied, involuntarily:

"Why, it didn't begin to rain until long after midnight."

"Then you heard it rain?" he asked, quickly.

"Oh—yes—yes," she stammered, with some confusion.

Taking quick mental note of her embarrassment, he stood looking at her in silence. All at once she turned, and her eyes encountered his steady gaze. Rising from his seat, the detective approached her. Kindly he said:

"Miss Masuret, I can't help you unless you trust me. What woke you up?"

She did not answer for a moment. Finally, with reluctance, she faltered:

"I heard a door close."

"Yes?"

"It seemed later than it really was, and I was a little alarmed. I got up and opened my door."

"You heard voices?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Argyle's?"

"Yes."

"Did you know who was with him? . . . Answer me." Again she was silent. Then, as he repeated the question, she replied, hysterically:

"No—no—I don't know!"

Rising quickly, she went over to the window and stood gazing into the street, her face averted. He followed her.

"Did you hear anything that sounded like a struggle?" he went on.

"No—they had closed the door."

"But you *did* hear angry voices, didn't you?" he persisted, when she did not answer.

"Yes," she replied, reluctantly.

He looked steadily at her, trying to read in her face what was passing in her mind.

"And you thought that Bruce and his father were quarreling?"

She turned round and held out her hand appealingly. Hastily she exclaimed:

"No—no—not that! Afterward, when I saw what had happened, I knew it couldn't have been Bruce. You won't attach any importance to it, will you? I had no real reason for thinking it was he."

He nodded.

"And you concealed this because you were afraid that it was Bruce?"

"I was afraid that some one might think it was he."

"Did you hear any one go away?"

"I heard the door bang. But I didn't go down—I was so unhappy—"

"You heard nothing more? So you went to sleep?"

She shook her head as she answered sadly:

"The rain kept me awake for a long time."

Kayton was about to put another question when

suddenly Joe entered the room with several inky papers in his hands. Closing the door carefully behind him, he advanced toward his employer.

"Gov'nor!"

The detective turned to the young girl. Apologetically, he said:

"One moment, Miss Masuret." As she rose with a sigh of relief and walked over to the fireplace he whispered quickly to his assistant: "Did you get them all, Joe?"

Handing over the prints, the youth answered:

"Yes, sir, all but—" Breaking off abruptly, he looked significantly at Mary.

Kayton took the impressions and glanced over them. Then, looking up suddenly, he turned to the young girl.

"Miss Masuret, did you know that you were to be Mr. Argyle's sole heir under the will?"

She was still at the fireplace, standing with one hand resting on the mantel, lost in thought, and apparently forgetful that any one else was in the room. She started as she heard the question, and a faint flush spread over her face. But she turned and faced her interrogator boldly as she replied:

"Yes."

"Did you speak of it to any one?"

"Mr. Argyle asked me not to."

"Did you know that Mr. Argyle contemplated rechanging his will a few hours before his death?"

Again she met his steady gaze as she replied, firmly:

"Yes—I had been urging him to do it."

Kayton bowed.

"That's all," he smiled. Then, as if changing the subject, he took up the finger-print impressions and added, carelessly: "We have here the finger-prints of all the women of the family who were in the house that night except yours, and we'd like yours."

"Mine?" she exclaimed, opening wide her eyes in surprise.

"Yes. They are needed for identification purposes. There are no two alike in the world," he answered, quickly.

"What do I do?" she asked, with a timid smile.

Taking one of the pieces of prepared paper, the detective placed it on the desk. Amiably he said:

"Just lay your fingers flatly on this blank piece of paper and press on it."

She laughed nervously.

"I can't hold my hands steady."

"That doesn't matter."

She made the print with the flat of her hand as directed; and, this done, he slipped before her another piece of the paper.

"Now your thumbs, please."

When she had made an impression to his satisfaction, he passed the papers to his assistant.

"See if you can bring these out, Joe."

Quickly the young man brushed the impressions with lampblack, bringing out the finger and hand prints with startling clearness. Mary, greatly interested, watched him curiously. When she saw her hand reproduced so accurately in black, she started.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, apprehensively.

"What is it?" demanded Kayton, looking at her with a smile.

"It's so gruesome! Can I go?"

"Yes. That's all for the present, thank you."

He bowed politely as she left the room. Directly the door was closed behind her he ran over to the table.

"Quick, Joe!" he exclaimed.

The assistant watched the door while Kayton quickly compared with the magnifying-glass the table finger-prints with the impressions made of the young girl's hands. His assistant waited breathlessly for the result.

"Is it the girl?" he gasped.

"No!" exclaimed Kayton, jubilantly.

Joe stared. Had the chief suddenly taken leave of his senses? Here they were breaking their heads trying to fit people's hands to the table impression, and Kayton actually seemed pleased when they didn't fit. Shaking his head, he held out another of the prints he had taken, saying, laconically:

"Mrs. Wyatt?"

Kayton examined it closely.

"No," he answered, less joyfully.

"The cook," said Joe, handing out another.

"No."

"Kitty?"

"No."

"Miss Thornton?"

Kayton shook his head. None of the women they had in view had made the finger-impressions. Positively he said:

"No. The woman who was in the room that night came from the outside. We've got to find her, Joe, wherever she is."

The assistant threw up his hands in despair.

"Gee! That's a big order!"

Outside was heard the sound of voices. Footsteps were approaching. Kayton went quickly to the door. As he passed his assistant he whispered:

"When I leave the room, come with me. I want to get Hurley out of the way."

Opening the door and thrusting his head into the hall, he called out:

"You may come in now."

CHAPTER X

BRUCE entered, followed by Miss Masuret and Mr. Hurley. The young man gave the detective a quick, keen look, and from him his glance went to Mary, as if trying to tell from the expression of their faces what had taken place between them. But before he could ask any questions Kayton turned to the lawyer. With apparent cordiality he said:

"Mr. Hurley, I'd like to have a little chat with you if you don't object. Do you mind going up to the billiard-room? I'll join you there immediately."

The lawyer bowed and went toward the door.

"By all means, Mr. Kayton. I'll go right up."

"Yes—go up. I'm coming."

The lawyer went out, and Kayton, making a movement as if he intended following him, partially closed the door behind him. But, unseen either by Bruce or Mary, he suddenly retraced his steps and, concealing himself behind a screen, stood listening.

Utterly unconscious of the fact that they were overheard, Mary went quickly to the young man. Her arms outstretched, she cried in distress:

"Oh, Bruce, I've so much wanted to speak to you ever since—"

The young man looked at her in surprise.

"Why, what is it, Mary?"

Her bosom heaving, almost breathless from fear and anxiety, the young girl faltered:

"The detective made me tell—"

Bruce stared at her in amazement.

"Made you tell—made you tell what?"

For a moment she said nothing, but looked at him in silence, hardly daring to give expression to the dreadful thoughts that were on her mind. Suddenly she burst out:

"Oh, Bruce! Can't you prove that you didn't come back here that night! Can't you establish an alibi?"

He still stared at her, not understanding.

"Mary, I don't know what you mean."

Almost hysterical, she went on:

"I was awake—I heard your father go to the door. Oh! I meant never to tell any one; but he made me—I don't know how! Can't you prove that it wasn't you?"

The blood rushed to the young man's face, then receded, leaving him deathly pale. Ah! Now he understood. Mary, too, believed him guilty of this horrible crime. Seizing hold of her arm almost roughly, his voice tense and broken, he exclaimed:

"Mary, what are you saying? That you heard father let *me* in?"

"Oh, Bruce, I thought I heard your voice—I thought I heard you quarreling."

He looked at her in silence for a few moments. His lips worked spasmodically, as if he were trying to control himself, before speaking. Finally he said, bitterly:

"What have you been thinking? That I came back here and quarreled with my father and—and—How could *you* think such a thing?"

She extended her arms appealingly.

"Oh, I didn't think it was on purpose, Bruce! Indeed I didn't!"

"What did you think?" he demanded.

"He was always so—so violent when he got angry at you—I thought he did something—made an attack on you, and you had to defend yourself. Of course, I knew it was an accident, Bruce—Don't look like that, Bruce!"

His face grew whiter, his mouth quivered with the emotion he could not control. The sense of wrong done him was overwhelming, and aroused within him such intensity of indignation that he could not trust himself to speak. At last, with an effort, he demanded, hoarsely:

"Have you believed all this time that I killed my father?"

"I tell you, Bruce, I thought it was an accident. I didn't blame you."

"An accident! Why, if such a thing had happened, wouldn't I have called you—roused the house—got help? How could you think such a thing? Mary, do you think so now?"

She held out her arms to him. Thank God, he was innocent! Her face, radiant now that all doubts were removed, her voice trembling with emotion, she exclaimed:

"No—no—not you, Bruce! You couldn't have done that!"

The sudden revulsion of feeling was almost too

much for her. She stumbled and collapsed on a chair.

But the young man, now thoroughly aroused, bitterly indignant at the injustice of these suspicions, was not so easily pacified. Heedless of her distress, he exclaimed, sarcastically:

"You do—you do, eh?"

Kayton had heard enough. Emerging from behind the screen and slamming the door as if he had re-entered the room, he came toward them. Bruce motioned to him to approach. Bitterly he said:

"Just in time, Mr. Kayton! At last we've got hold of something worth while giving to the papers. Miss Masuret heard me come back. . . . That ought to satisfy the yellow press. That ought to clear her! I did not come back, but give it out just the same—I can stand it! Give it out!"

He snatched up his hat and cane and made for the door. Mary tried to stop him, but before she could reach him, he rushed out of the room.

"Bruce! Bruce!" she cried after him, in great distress.

She staggered toward Kayton.

"Help us, do help us!" she cried, imploringly. "Don't say he came back here! I was wrong—I'm sure I was. He says he didn't come—please don't tell any one! What have I done? Oh, what have I done?"

The detective placed his hands firmly on the young girl's shoulders. Quietly but kindly he said:

"You've done just the right thing. All will be well. I begin to see daylight. I want you to pull yourself together. I'm going to need you. I'm

counting on you. We need you. Will you help me?"

"Oh—I can't—I can't—"

"Yes, you can; you're just the right sort of a girl. You want to clear him, don't you? As much as he wants to clear you?"

"Yes—oh yes—I—"

He patted her on the back reassuringly.

"Well, then, it's all right. You go to your room and pull yourself together, and I'll let you know when I need you."

He turned from her as if the matter were closed. She drew a half-sobbing breath, looked at him from under her drooping, swollen eyelids, then turned and went slowly in the direction of the door. He looked after her curiously for a moment, then he called after her:

"Miss Masuret!"

She stopped and slowly turned round. He approached her, and for a few moments they looked into each other's eyes in silence. Finally, he broke the spell. Kindly, he said:

"Just a moment. I want you to promise me that you won't worry any more. I can't say yet who's responsible for all this, but I do know that neither you nor Bruce had anything to do with it."

Her face flushed with pleasure. Quickly she exclaimed:

"You do! Oh—thank you, Mr. Kayton!"

"Yes, I am convinced of it, and if I never do anything else as long as I live, I'm going to clear this mystery up for your sake. I want you to believe that. Do you think you can trust me?"

She looked at him earnestly. Frankness and sincerity were reflected in every line of her pale, earnest-looking face. The detective, watching her in silence, thought he had seldom seen a more attractive-looking girl. Fervently she exclaimed:

"Yes—oh yes—I'm so thankful to you. . . ."

She tried to say more, but, overcome with emotion, hurriedly left the room.

Kayton made no further attempt to stop her. After her departure he stood still, lost in thought.

Everything was clear as daylight now. Both Bruce and Mary were innocent. No inmate of the house had committed the murder. The midnight assassin was not a burglar or any ordinary criminal. It was some one with whom Mr. Argyle was well acquainted, some one he knew well enough to invite to his house at such a late hour as one o'clock in the morning. It might be some one with whom he had business dealings and who considered himself wronged. The person had come to the house to demand an explanation or redress, and a heated argument had followed. Miss Masuret was sure she heard voices raised in angry dispute. No doubt they quarreled, and the stranger, losing self-control, killed his host. Certainly it was as plausible a theory as any other. Who was the stranger? That was the next thing to find out. The strong presumption was that it was the same person whose telephone message earlier in the evening had so perturbed the banker. The first step was to consult the telephone records and find out who called the Argyle residence about that time. Then, all at once, another idea flashed across the detective's active brain. Was the brand new

one-hundred-dollar bill a clue? Could there be any connection between that banknote and the murder? Was the note genuine? If it was a counterfeit, a great deal might be at once explained. If the old man, for some inexplicable reason, had had any dealings with counterfeiters, dangerous and desperate men who would stop at nothing, the solution of the mystery would be at hand. The first step was to get Washington on the wire and tell them to rush a Secret Service agent to New York.

The detective was still buried in deep thought when Joe entered for instructions.

"Have you got anything yet, gov'nor, that I can work on?"

Aroused from his reverie, Kayton's manner underwent an abrupt change. Turning quickly to his assistant, he said:

"Yes—call up Chief Flynn!"

The young man stared in astonishment.

"Washington!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Washington," retorted the chief, sharply. "Did you think the Secret Service has moved? 6400 Main."

Trained to obey without question, the young man without further comment went to the telephone and unhooked the receiver. As he did so, Kayton held out his hand.

"Give me that magnifying-glass, Joe."

Drawing the glass from his pocket, and handing it to his employer, the young man turned to the telephone.

"Hello, Central. Give me long distance."

As he waited for the connection, he wondered

what was in the wind. What could Washington have to do with this case? Finally his curiosity got the better of him.

"What's up, gov'nor?" he asked.

Kayton took from his pocket the banknote he had found in the desk and studied it carefully through the glass. Slowly he replied:

"I've got a hunch there's something queer about this bill."

The telephone rang. Joe spoke quickly into the transmitter:

"Hello, long distance! I want Washington, 6400 Main." Turning to his chief, he said, "You know it's funny to me one of those cops didn't pinch that hundred-dollar bill?"

Kayton chuckled as he replied, grimly:

"Joe, a man's mouth is responsible for a good deal of damage if he doesn't use his brain. You've got that New York habit of knocking the police force."

Embarrassed at the rebuke, the young man exclaimed, in some confusion:

"What's that, gov'nor?"

"Suppose there are a few grafters among our ten thousand policemen—whose fault is it? Yours and mine, Joe, for putting the political grafters over them; and I'll tell you something else, Joe, while we're on this subject: there are a lot of tough guys here in New York, but there are damned few who want to start anything single-handed with a New York cop, and don't you forget it."

Joe grinned.

"I guess you're right. I never looked at it in that light."

"No, and a lot of other people never looked at it like that, but it goes just the same."

Still seated at the telephone, Joe began speaking to Washington:

"Hello! Is the chief in? Mr. Kayton wants to speak to him." Turning to his employer, he said, hastily: "Here he is, gov'nor."

Kayton hurried over and took his place at the transmitter. Before speaking he turned to his assistant:

"Quick, Joe, cover the doors!"

The young man at once locked the door leading to the hall and hurried out the other way. Kayton began talking into the telephone.

"Is this Mr. Flynn? Hello, Chief. . . . Oh, hard at work." Lowering his voice, he went on: "Have you had any report of a counterfeit hundred-dollar gold certificate—E-9737? E—a, b, c, d, e,—973—don't you get it? Well, I can't speak any louder . . . you understand. That's it. Series of 1907—yes. You haven't? Well, I have one here that I thought might be bad. No; but it looks a little light. If it's counterfeit, it's the best one I've ever seen. No; they must have bleached to get the paper. The head's a corker. . . . Very well, I'll turn it over to the New York office. No. It's a murder case. Well —thank you very much. Good-by, Mr. Flynn."

Hanging up the receiver, he rose from the desk and called out:

"Come in, Joe!"

The assistant reappeared on the threshold. As he entered he turned and spoke to some one in the outside hall:

"You can come in now, Mr. Hurley."

Kayton, meantime, quickly slipped the hundred-dollar bill back into the envelope, which he put in his pocket. The next instant Mr. Hurley came in, followed by Joe.

Aggressive and with his usual self-important air, the lawyer entered jauntily, swinging his cane and glancing keenly from one to the other. Watching the detective's face closely, he asked:

"Well, how are we getting along with the mystery, Mr. Kayton?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear Mr. Hurley, there's no such thing as a mystery, if you use a little common sense. You know in a case of this sort you're confronted by a long line of facts, and you hammer away till you break through somewhere. By the by, Mr. Hurley, when you first met Mr. Argyle— How *did* you meet him?"

The lawyer smiled broadly.

"Well, now, Mr. Kayton, I'll tell you about that. I had a Western proposition in which I wanted to interest him, and I went to his office, and he proved to be a very approachable man. I laid the matter before him in the usual way. He took it up, investigated it, found it was what I said it was, and we got together on it. I suppose that gave him confidence in me. Anything else I can do?"

"No, thank you," said Kayton, dryly.

The lawyer turned to go. Carelessly he said:

"Well, call me up in the morning, if I can be of any help."

"I won't be here to-morrow," replied the detective, dryly. "I'll be in Pittsburg."

The lawyer opened his eyes. With mock sympathy he asked:

"Have you got to go to Pittsburg?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you think I'd go if I didn't have to? Some of my operatives have just rounded up a case there, and I've got to see the man and pull him across. I expect to take the night train back, however."

The lawyer proceeded to the door. When he reached it he halted and stood for a moment in the doorway, looking back. With a chuckle, he said:

"I'll see you the day after to-morrow, then."

Kayton smiled grimly.

"Yes—yes—do. Good morning."

The visitor disappeared, and Kayton began putting on his coat. Turning to his assistant, he pointed significantly in the direction the attorney had taken.

"Trail him, Joe!" he said, in a whisper.

"What?" exclaimed the young man, staring at his chief in astonishment. Kayton did not stop to explain. He merely repeated, laconically:

"Follow Hurley!"

"Hurley!" gasped the assistant.

The detective nodded. Shrewdly he said:

"When a man says, 'Well, now, I'll tell you about that,' it's one safe bet he's lying. Trail him!"

Joe made a wild dash for the door, but, catching in his chief's eyes an expression of disapproval, suddenly checked himself and went out quietly.

Kayton waited for a few moments after his subordinate's departure, then carelessly picked up his hat and gloves and followed him out.

CHAPTER XI

THE announcement that America's famous detective had been retained to probe the Argyle murder caused public interest in this *cause cēlèbre* to run higher than ever. The latest developments were followed with breathless attention, the newspapers devoted columns to the affair, featuring sensational details, publishing pictures more or less accurate of the Argyle house and room where the body was discovered, giving portraits of Mary Masuret and Bruce Argyle, printing interviews with friends, servants, policemen, detectives, or whoever was in a position to throw the slightest light on this extraordinary case, which, owing to the prominence of the victim, made it one of the most sensational murders in the dark annals of local crime.

Public opinion by this time had completely exonerated both the son and the adopted daughter from being in any way involved in the tragedy. Bruce's straightforward, manly attitude, his genuine grief over his father's death, and consistent, honorable behavior throughout had gained him the respect of all, while any suspicion which the libelous, heartless innuendos of scandalous yellow newspapers had directed toward Miss Masuret had been completely dispelled by Kayton himself, who, in an interview conspicuously featured, declared most positively that

he was personally convinced of the girl's innocence and that all such gossip and rumors were cruel slander. In fact, so eloquent a champion did Kayton show himself that his office associates, who had always regarded him as a cynical old bachelor, dead to all sentiment, looked at each other and whistled significantly.

Yet some one had killed John Argyle. There could be no question about that, and the fact that robbery had not been the motive only made the mystery the more baffling. There were many who owed the old millionaire a grudge for his sharp practice, but there is a wide difference between disliking a man and killing him. Yet it was certain that the unknown person who had secretly visited him late on the night of the murder might have some strong reason for wishing the banker out of the way.

Kayton, whose instinct rarely failed him, was now more than ever convinced that he had hit a trail in the new one-hundred-dollar banknote. The more he examined the bill, the more he believed it to be spurious. When the Secret Service agent arrived he would be able to tell in a moment. If the bill were false, it was quite within the possibilities that the dead man knew it, that he had threatened the counterfeiters, and the latter, in fear of exposure, had not hesitated to kill him. It was, of course, only a theory at best, but since the one-hundred-dollar note had been found in the dead man's desk, it was worth looking into. On the other hand, what possible dealings could a wealthy man like John Argyle have with a band of crooks? It was certainly most puzzling.

For several days following the examination of the Argyle servants the Kayton offices fairly sizzled with activity. Detectives came and went; wires and telephones were kept hot in every direction. Every resource at the command of the most efficient detective bureau on earth was put in motion to apprehend the slayer of John Argyle.

Kayton himself remained most of the time at his desk directing the campaign. The more he studied the case, the more convinced did he become that at least one person intimately connected with the Argyle household would bear watching. He had not liked the man's manner from the outset. He was tricky and catlike. Certainly Mr. Hurley would bear watching.

The chief never reached his office before ten o'clock, and this morning he was later than usual. It caused no comment among his staff, for it was Kayton's custom to stop off at places on the way down-town in order to make investigations on his own account. In very important cases he never relied entirely on others; he accepted only what his own eyes could see. That was why he was often kept out himself.

Detective Nash was impatiently awaiting his arrival, while Manager Leishman, looking more clerical and benevolent than ever, kept him company. Nash, for want of something better to do, took from a cardboard box on Kayton's desk a new pair of handcuffs, the bright steel of which shone like polished silver in the morning sunlight.

"Where'd we get *these?*" he growled.

Leishman smiled grimly.

"Oh, that's the latest thing in handcuffs they've

sent us. You see—press this to open them. Now brush against your man. Be sure you strike his wrist—and they snap on him this way. You see it gives three sizes, too. If that were a woman, it would close right down to the third one. And this knuckle in the middle—that's so they can't get any leverage on it."

Nash chuckled.

"Well, that's the prettiest thing I've seen in a long time! Gov'nor get in yet?"

Replacing the handcuffs in the box, the manager answered:

"Not yet—we expect him every minute."

Nash lit a cigar. Comically he said:

"I'll have to get a string to my hat. We'll all be living in a high wind again to-day." Pointing to a voluminous manuscript lying on the chief's desk, he asked: "What's all that?"

"Cortwright's report on the Argyle case—on the servants."

"Do you expect him to read all that?"

"No; he won't read it, but he'll know what's in it."

Suddenly the telephone-bell rang. Leishman took off the receiver, while Nash sauntered over to the window.

"Hello. Where are you now? Well! Where's that? What have you done? Oh, you locked them both up. I didn't think they had a jail there. You'd better put a couple of men to see they don't rob the jailer. Hurry on and clean it up. We've got a case here for you—an awful foxy fellow. He tests himself every time he takes a street-car. So

crooked he couldn't lie straight in bed, and he looks under it before he gets in. No, he's an old bachelor."

Leishman hung up the receiver with a grin, and as he did so the office door swung open and in walked Kayton, bag in hand.

"Hello, boys!"

"Good morning, gov'nor!" said Nash, cheerily.

"Good morning, Chief," bowed the more punctilious Mr. Leishman.

Nash grinned at his superior.

"Well, how's Pittsburg, gov'nor?"

Kayton quickly put his finger to his lips in warning and went straight to his desk. Taking a revolver from his pocket, he first slipped it into a drawer. Then, looking up, he replied:

"How's Pittsburg? 'Ssh! We got the whole bunch. One weak-knee came through, and all the rest tumbled."

"Do you think you'll get convictions?" demanded Leishman.

Kayton laughed.

"Convictions? If they sat on their own juries they couldn't help themselves out of jail now."

"All grafting, gov'nor?" asked Nash.

Dropping into his seat, the chief answered:

"Yes, and what makes me sore is, they went around four-flushing about how they were going to shoot me, and the newspaper-boys played it up till those damned insurance companies canceled every accident policy I had."

Nash chuckled.

"Couldn't you sue them on that?"

"Sue who?" demanded Kayton, affecting surprise.

"The newspapers."

Kayton burst into a laugh.

"Sue a newspaper! Wake up!"

Hanging his employer's coat on a hook, Nash left the office, while Kayton turned to Leishman and pointed to the pile of papers on his desk.

"Is there anything here I ought to see?"

The manager shook his head.

"No, I've attended to them." Pointing to a pile of letters and telegrams on the desk, he added: "There's your other mail."

Seated at his desk, Kayton started to look over his correspondence. Picking up a telegram, he exclaimed:

"If this fellow doesn't quit sending telegrams he'll spoil everything. Wire him we'll let him know when we've got something to tell him. Sign it David Tuttle. Is Sam out there?"

"Yes."

"Send him in."

Leishman went to the door and called into the outer office.

"Sam!"

This done, the manager left the room. Meantime, Kayton turned to the report and glanced through it rapidly. While thus engaged a man about forty years of age, of husky build and fresh complexion, entered the office. Advancing to the desk, he said, cordially:

"Good morning, gov'nor."

Kayton nodded.

"Good morning, Sam. Tell me about this Argyle report."

"Well, we've run out all the inside servants and the cook and the chauffeur. Nothing wrong there at all. We've found the policeman that was on the beat. He has nothing. We looked up some of the discharged servants—a coachman. Nothing in that."

"Did you look up Mrs. Wyatt?"

"Yes, sir. Nothing there—nothing but a gabby old woman."

Kayton chuckled. Mimicking the housekeeper, he laughed: "Yes, I know what you mean. I know what you mean." Becoming serious again, he took up a telegram and said: "I see you couldn't locate that telephone call?"

"No, sir."

The chief made a gesture of dismissal.

"All right. That's all. Send Joe in here."

The man went out, and Kayton turned with redoubled vigor to the accumulation of work on his desk. There were letters and telegraphic reports from his operatives all over the country, telling of clues followed up, suspected people shadowed, intricate, puzzling details of a dozen different cases that would be absolutely incomprehensible to any intelligence not specially trained for such work. To a man of Kayton's mental capacity it was all the merest child's play. As quick as he scanned one despatch he smashed it on a hook and picked up another, his alert brain grasping immediately the relative importance of each message, able to seize instantly what was practical and of immediate value from what was merely theoretical. Like most successful men, Kayton never wasted time; he was

never idle for a moment. Full of tremendous energy, he could attend to a dozen matters at once, and when he was once at his desk things fairly hummed. He was still busy perusing rapidly one telegram after another when Joe entered in obedience to the summons. The young man looked tired, and had a bad scratch across his face covered with sticking-plaster. His employer looked at him in surprise.

"Hello, Joe!" he exclaimed, cordially. "Marked for identification?"

Advancing to the desk, the assistant put his hand to his cheek. Ruefully he said:

"Picked that up trailing Hurley. A wise cop got after me, and I fell down a fire-escape."

"How about Hurley?" demanded his chief, eagerly.

Joe shook his head.

"Nothing doing. Haven't been able to line him up with anything. We take him out in the morning and trail him around all day from one office to another. He don't go to court. Nothing busy in his office but the telephone. We take him home and put him to bed at night—do everything but hear him say his prayers."

Kayton laughed. Good-humoredly he said:

"Well, don't lose him. Did you attend to that fake 'Personal' about Nellie Marsh—Miss Masuret's mother—about the fake legacy?"

The young man nodded.

"It's planted in this morning's *Herald*, and if Nellie Marsh sees it we'll get her."

"Sure you got it right?" asked Kayton, anxiously.

For answer the assistant picked up a copy of the New York *Herald* and proceeded to look for the advertisement. Quickly he said:

"I think so."

"Read it to me."

At last the young man found what he was looking for, and, coming closer, he read aloud:

"*Information wanted regarding 'N. M.,' beneficiary, Argyle estate. Address Mead & Tolworthy, St. Paul Building.*"

Kayton smiled grimly.

"Did the papers bite?"

"Well, yesterday's *Telegram* played it up. Their men beat it to Tolworthy's, and when they couldn't find out anything they chucked in some more mystery about a new murder clue and a missing heir to the Argyle estate."

The chief chuckled.

"Well, if she doesn't see the 'Personal,' that ought to reach her."

As he spoke the bell of the desk telephone rang sharply. Kayton pulled the apparatus to him and, after listening a moment, spoke into it:

"Mr. Hurley? Oh—ask him to come in." Hastily hanging up the receiver, he turned to his assistant. "Here, Joe, take these telegrams—they're all mixed up with half a dozen aliases for each counterfeiter. Pick out the information and make a sort of record of past performances—sit over there at the desk—and keep an ear this way on Hurley."

Taking off his coat and hat, the young man hung them up. This done, he took the bunch of telegrams from the chief's desk over to the corner of

the room, where he had his own desk, and sat there looking them over. While he was thus occupied the door of the outer office was pushed open and Mr. Hurley appeared.

The lawyer gave a swift, keen glance round the office to see who was there; then, removing his hat with more politeness than he usually showed, he advanced to the desk and said:

"I just wanted to speak to you for a moment, Mr. Kayton."

The detective looked up and gave the visitor a cool nod. Carelessly he answered:

"Glad to see you any time, Mr. Hurley. I expect to get a good deal of assistance from you."

The lawyer laughed nervously.

"I dont know about *that;* but, of course, I'll be glad to do anything I can."

The detective held out a box of cigars.

"Smoke?"

"Thanks."

The lawyer took a seat and, lighting a cigar, crossed his legs comfortably. After a few puffs in silence, he said:

"By the way, in line with your theory, that it was an old servant who was blackmailing, it occurred to me that they used to have a coachman who may have had a grievance because the chauffeur supplanted him."

Kayton looked up quickly.

"Do you remember his name, Mr. Hurley?"

"No; but I suppose the family would have it."

"Thanks. I'll look him up."

Another silence followed, during which both men

puffed away quietly at their cigars. Every now and then the detective gave his visitor a swift, sideways glance, as if trying to read what was really passing in the lawyer's mind.

What was the real motive of this visit? Certainly not to talk about coachmen with grievances. No; it was impossible to give Mr. Hurley credit for such unselfishness. He would hardly have taken the trouble to call merely to tell him that. The real object of his visit probably was to learn something of more immediate concern to himself.

Suddenly Mr. Hurley broke the silence. Casually he remarked:

"I saw the Mead & Tolworthy 'Personal' in the *Herald* yesterday, and thought it might be a new clue; but they say not. They referred me to you."

Pretending to be busy with his papers, Kayton for a moment made no answer. Then, after a pause, he said, unconcernedly:

"Yes, they consulted me. In Mr. Argyle's will drawn up by old Mr. Tolworthy there was a legacy to a Miss Nellie Marsh—the present firm has no knowledge of any Nellie Marsh. That information evidently died with old Mr. Tolworthy and Mr. Argyle. They asked me to find her, thinking there might be some scandal."

The lawyer listened eagerly.

"Yes—yes—"

"And for that reason I used only the initials N. M. Did you ever hear Mr. Argyle refer to a Miss Marsh?"

Mr. Hurley sat back in his chair, and in his ex-

asperating self-important manner replied, sententiously:

"Well, now, I'll tell you about that. When we were discussing the new will we didn't get to the lesser legatees."

The detective shook his head.

"It's too large a sum to have been simply a bequest to an old servant. It runs up in the thousands."

"Well, in that case the person will doubtless be expecting to be remembered by Mr. Argyle, and show up."

He rose, as if the conversation had taken a turn that no longer interested him. The detective watched him for a moment in silence, and then he said, carelessly:

"Oh yes, the whole thing may be perfectly innocent; but to avoid anything unpleasant for the family the lawyers thought they'd better be on the safe side. You understand, Mr. Hurley, this is strictly confidential."

"Oh, of course, of course—certainly."

At that moment the telephone-bell rang. Kayton picked up the receiver. After listening, he said:

"Ask him to wait a minute!"

The lawyer made a move in the direction of the door.

"Well, I won't take up any more of your time."

"Going so soon? Come in again, Mr. Hurley."

"Thank you, I will. I shall be interested to hear if there are any new developments in the case."

"I'll keep you posted," smiled the detective, politely, as he saw his caller to the door.

CHAPTER XII

AS the sound of the lawyer's footsteps died away the detective turned to his assistant. Triumphantly he exclaimed: "Looks like a nibble, Joe."

"It certainly does," grinned the youth.

Again the telephone-bell rang sharply. Kayton unhooked the receiver, and after listening a second said, cordially:

"Ask Mr. Colt to come in."

Outside in the outer office a big, hearty voice was heard saying:

"All right, Leish, I'll go right in."

The door was thrown open, and there entered a big, thick-set man with a breezy manner. He was well fed and well-salaried looking, like most government employees.

"Hello, you old plutocrat!" was his cordial greeting, as he caught sight of the detective.

"Hello, Colt," laughed Kayton.

The new-comer turned about and glanced curiously round the room.

"You've got an office like a bloated Senator, haven't you? What you tryin' to do to us with that hundred-dollar bill?"

Kayton looked up eagerly.

"Well," he demanded, "is it phony?"

The Secret Service officer drew the note from his pocket and nodded.

"Yes; but it's a dandy! It's better than the real. You've got the luck of a drunken Indian."

"That's what they all call it," smiled Kayton.

"You go out on a measly murder case and stub your toe on a thing like this! Let me tell you—it's a bomb under the Treasury. We've wired Washington, and they've got a scare out all over the country. If you turn up the man who made that the Republicans 'll elect you President."

Kayton laughed heartily as he retorted:

"The Republicans will have a hell of a time electing anybody President."

"I never have any luck like that," grumbled Colt, handing him back the note.

Kayton's eyes twinkled mischievously.

"You're not Irish," he laughed.

"Yes, I am too; but it was so mild it didn't take."

Taking a box of his choicest cigars from their hiding-place in a lower drawer, the detective held it out.

"Smoke, Colt?"

"Sure."

The agent took a cigar.

"Have any others turned up?" demanded Kayton, his mind full of the business on hand.

Colt lit his cigar leisurely. Laconically he answered:

"No, but the country may soon be crawling with 'em."

Putting the cigar-box down on the table, Kayton

went over to the window and stood carefully inspecting the note.

"How do you suppose they ever put it together?" he asked.

The agent shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a photographic process—that's a cinch. No hand ever touched that plate. Look at the lathework."

Colt settled himself down comfortably in his chair. The day was young, and Kayton's cigars were excellent. There was no reason why he should hurry away. He would stop and talk awhile. Taking off his hat, he absent-mindedly placed it on his host's desk, much to the horror of Kayton, who, resenting the sacrilege, immediately handed it back to him. The agent took it without offense and unconsciously replaced it on his head. Still thinking of the counterfeit, he went on:

"And look at the ink."

"Perfect!" exclaimed Kayton. "How'd you ever get on to it?"

"Why, some of these silk fibers struck me as off color." Explosively, he went on: "Say, this sort of thing is going to knock the currency into a cocked hat. Pretty soon you won't be able to take money from a man unless he gives you a Masonic grip with it. And you mean to tell me that you found that bill in a millionaire's desk?"

Kayton smiled.

"It seems impossible, but I did."

The agent shook his head.

"It seems incredible that a man in Argyle's position should mix himself up with a gang of

criminals who'd blackmail him for the rest of his life."

"I know. Talk about mysteries, Colt! This is the only real mystery I ever met."

"Have you got any clue?"

"Well, I'm playing a long shot." Holding out the banknote, he added: "Couldn't any of you experts down at the office give a wild guess whose work this was?"

The agent shook his head thoughtfully.

"No. There isn't a counterfeiter on the books could do it. The man who got that up has been quietly experimenting for years."

Kayton turned to his assistant.

"Let me have that list, Joe."

Opening a drawer in the archives, the young man took out a paper containing the names of well-known criminals already convicted for counterfeiting. Kayton glanced it over.

"How about Brockton?" he said, musingly.

Colt shook his head.

"H'm—he hasn't been out long enough."

"Could old man Rich have done it?"

Tipping back in his chair, Colt carelessly flicked off his cigar-ash, which fell to the highly polished floor. To Joe, who had been watching his free and easy behavior with growing disapproval ever since he came in, this was the last straw. Rising with a scowl and coming forward, he kicked away the ash and then returned indignantly to his seat, quite unnoticed by the agent, whose mind was intent on Kayton's suggestion. Colt shook his head.

"Oh no; he's too feeble. It may be a new-comer in the business."

Laying the list down on the desk, Kayton passed his hand over his brow. Thoughtfully he said:

"I've got a hunch that it's one of that 'Frisco gang that was rounded up about fifteen years ago."

Colt looked up in surprise.

"Who do you mean?"

Instead of replying, Kayton made a gesture to his assistant.

"Joe, get me those wires from 'Frisco." The young man handed him two telegrams, and he went on:

"There's a 'Frisco woman in the background of the Argyle case. She was supposed to be dead. I wired for information and found she'd been sent to prison with a gang of counterfeiters. Here it is—"

Holding up one telegram, he read aloud:

"'*Nellie Marsh sentenced to St. Quentin for three years about time of reported death. Implicated with Webster gang counterfeiters.*'" Holding up the other, he again read: "'*N. M. left state, expiration of sentence. No further record here.*'" Looking up, Kayton went on: "Now you remember, Colt, that the man who made the plate for that Webster gang was Kreisler — Friederick Kreisler. He did some pretty crafty work, and he hasn't been heard from since."

The agent started bolt upright in his chair.

"That's so!" he exclaimed. "Gee! That counterfeit note hooked up with Argyle, and Argyle with the woman, and the woman with the Webster gang —makes a noise like a lockstep!"

"Don't it?" chuckled the detective.

"I should say it does!"

In his excitement he again flecked off his cigar-ash, but this time catching sight of Joe, who was still watching him, he hastily covered the ashes with his foot and glanced apprehensively in the direction of the assistant's desk. With a subdued chuckle he said:

"I swear you've certainly got the luck!"

"I haven't got the woman or the man," replied Kayton, grimly.

The agent laughed.

"Oh, you'll wake up to-morrow and find 'em scratchin' at the door."

Before Kayton could reply the door of the outer office opened, and Leishman entered with an opened telegram, which he handed to his superior. Quickly Kayton glanced it over.

"A wire from Washington. The chief 'll be here at two o'clock."

Colt rose. With a laugh he said:

"I'll bet he's bringing a bad case of St. Vitus' dance with him. Got the whole Secret Service on the thing now. I'm off."

"Don't go, Colt," said Kayton, with a good-natured laugh.

Colt grinned.

"Oh, you discourage me! Things come so damned easy to you."

Stooping quickly, he grabbed a handful of cigars from the box on the desk and, putting them in his pocket, walked out of the office laughing loudly, while Kayton, eying the dilapidated cigar-box with dismay, hastened to hide it away before another raid could be made on it.

Joe looked after the retreating agent with scorn. Contemptuously he said:

"He's got a lazy man's grouch, gov'nor. He seems to think everything *you* do is luck."

Kayton smiled.

"Good luck's like lightning, Joe. It strikes the man who keeps out in the rain."

"I guess you draw it, gov'nor, because you're some live wire."

The chief picked up the telephone receiver. With a gesture of good-natured impatience he exclaimed:

"Cut that, Joe. No bouquets. Get me Mead & Tolworthy." As he hung up, he turned to his assistant and said:

"Joe, we've got all the rocks flying with that counterfeit."

The youth chuckled.

"Yes; I was just thinking—that murder was hard on the Argyles, but it was a great thing for the government."

The telephone-bell rang. Kayton spoke into the receiver:

"Yes—hello—Mr. Tolworthy? This is Kayton. Have you heard anything from our 'N. M.' 'Personal'? Yes, Hurley was in to see me. Oh! . . . When did she call you up? Just now? Oh—did you think she was a reporter? Did you refer her to me? Well, that was right. . . . No, she hasn't shown up yet. . . . I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Tolworthy." Hanging up and turning to his assistant, he said:

"Joe, tell the outer office that if any woman comes from Mead & Tolworthy I want to see her right away."

The young man looked up. Eagerly he asked:

"'N. M.' heard from, gov'nor?"

"Well, some woman called up Mead & Tolworthy a few minutes ago."

"Oh, just after Hurley left?"

"Exactly."

Joe winked at his chief, a piece of familiarity he only permitted himself to do at most important and critical moments.

"Then it *was* a nibble?" he cried, triumphantly.

Kayton nodded. With a grim smile he replied:

"No, Joe—a bite. He swallowed it—hook, line, and sinker."

The assistant, a broad grin on his face, went out of the office just as Mr. Leishman came in. The manager had in his hand some papers which he held out to the chief.

"Mr. Argyle and Mrs. Wyatt are waiting to see you, gov'nor."

"Show them right in."

The manager went out to summon the visitors. As he disappeared, the telephone-bell rang. Kayton picked up the receiver, and after listening a moment replied with some impatience:

"Who? . . . Well, no. Tell him I can't see him. Ask him to come to-morrow morning. No—I won't see him!"

He hung up the receiver just as Bruce and Mrs. Wyatt entered from the outer office. Putting down his cigar, he rose and said, politely:

"Good morning!"

"Good morning, Mr. Kayton," said Bruce, cordially.

"Good morning, Mrs. Wyatt. Won't you be seated?"

They sat down, and the detective looked from one to the other, wondering what had brought them. Bruce soon enlightened him.

"Mr. Kayton, Mrs. Wyatt has remembered something my father said that she thinks might be a real clue for you to work on."

The housekeeper, fussy and voluble as ever, leaned heavily on the chief's desk at the risk of spilling many of the papers.

"Yes, I don't know what brought it into my mind."

Nervously, almost unconsciously she moved the telephone which stood between her and Kayton. Instantly the detective seized it and put it back. She noticed his annoyance and, murmuring an apology, continued:

"I was eating breakfast—drinking my coffee—when suddenly it came to me. I mean to say, I recalled distinctly a conversation that we had once at the table when he was reading the morning paper. I couldn't repeat his words exactly, but whatever he said was suggested by a case in the paper. Do you know what I mean?"

"But you told me—" interrupted Bruce.

Kayton put out a hand.

"Just a moment, Mr. Argyle." Turning to the housekeeper, he asked: "Do you remember what the case was in the paper?"

She shook her head dubiously.

"Well, I can't say positively. I mean to say, I don't *know*. But what he said was that he had gone into something—"

"Of what sort?"

"Well, that he was speculating or investing—and he wished he hadn't. And what I felt at the time was—I distinctly remember it—that he was in danger—"

"Of what?" demanded Kayton.

"That he was in danger of—of being taken advantage of—"

Bruce made an impatient exclamation.

"Why, you told me somebody was trying to blackmail him!"

She shook her head helplessly.

"I know. But I've been thinking it all over, and it's much more clear to me. Do you know what I mean?"

"Then you don't think it was a blackmailing case in the paper?" interrupted Kayton.

The housekeeper smirked.

"Well, I don't know. I think it was Mr. Bruce who put that in my mind."

"You don't recall the date of the paper?"

She shook her head.

"No; but it must have been before I went away, because it was his death that brought me back, you know."

Kayton nodded.

"I see. Thank you very much, Mrs. Wyatt. It's quite possible that a man in Mr. Argyle's position should have thought himself liable to be taken advantage of."

Mrs. Wyatt beamed.

"I was sure you'd see something in it. I'll be so glad if I've thought of it in time to help. I

mean to say, it seems as if we'd never find out the truth."

Kayton rose in self-defense, and she rattled on.

"I don't mean to hurry you, Mr. Kayton." With a gesture of despair the detective sank back in his seat, and she continued: "But here are the papers again this morning, trying to show now that Bruce did it, and that's just as awful as to say that Mary did it. And, by the way, I want to know what that N. M. 'Personal' meant? They told me to ask you."

"Well, Mrs. Wyatt, that's simply an attempt to reach an old employee named Nathan Mills."

"Oh, I thought perhaps—I thought it meant—"

Bruce now came to the rescue. Breaking in, he said:

"You've got an appointment, Mrs. Wyatt."

Again Kayton rose as if the interview were ended. Bruce moved toward the door, followed reluctantly by the housekeeper. Before she had gone half-way, however, Mrs. Wyatt turned round. Explosively she burst forth again:

"After eleven o'clock! Good gracious! What will my dressmaker say? I'm so sorry, Mr. Kayton. One has to keep appointments on time with a dressmaker just like doctors and dentists, and I suppose it's the same way with detectives. They keep you waiting hours, but that doesn't matter because, you see, you pay them. Do you know what I mean?"

Bruce bustled her unceremoniously toward the door. Hastily he said:

"I'll go down to the taxi with you."

"Good-by," said Kayton, with a smile.

His irony and Bruce's impatience did not escape the housekeeper. Again halting, she exclaimed, testily:

"I know you both think I'm talking too much; but when I have anything to say I have to say it my own way. I shouldn't have said anything if you hadn't asked me to—now don't hurry me! I'm not going without saying good-by to Mr. Kayton."

Afraid she would come back, the detective hastened forward.

"Good-by, Mrs. Wyatt."

"Good-by!" she said, frigidly, with offended dignity.

She went out grandly, followed by Bruce. They had no sooner disappeared than Leishman appeared.

"Gov'nor, will you please sign these papers?" Indicating the room at the back with a nod, he added, quickly: "Miss Masuret is here."

"All right," said Kayton, closing his cabinet.

Hastening to the door, he opened it and called out:

"Come in, Miss Masuret. I'm delighted to see you. How are you to-day?"

CHAPTER XIII

IT was no longer with fear and trembling that Mary Masuret came into the presence of the world-famous detective. She felt rather that she was coming to see a friend. During all the dark, agonizing days of doubt and suspicion, when every one's hand seemed raised against her, Mr. Kayton alone had shown her kindness and consideration. Instead of an implacable enemy she had found in him a champion. Quickly convinced of her innocence, he had taken prompt and effective steps to silence once for all the cruel, baseless rumors that had circulated about her, and he had threatened with legal proceedings any newspaper which printed anything further reflecting upon her character. For this and other services rendered at such a critical time the young girl could not but feel deeply grateful. Indeed, it was more than gratitude that she owed him. She felt that she would be hopelessly in his debt all her life.

Kayton smilingly held out his hand as the young girl came in, making no effort to conceal the fact that he was glad to see her. She took it shyly, and for a moment they stood, hands clasped, without speaking. Finally, breaking the silence which had begun to embarrass her, he repeated:

"How are you this morning?"

Her voice was slightly constrained and manner nervous as she answered, in a low voice:

"Very well, thank you."

She advanced farther into the room, and he pointed to a seat near his desk. But she did not sit down, and for a few moments he also stood, watching her closely.

"Did you have any trouble getting down here?"

She smiled wearily as she answered:

"The reporters were in front of the house, so I came out the servants' entrance on the side street. And I didn't wear mourning—I was afraid it would attract attention." Changing her tone abruptly and turning to face him, she added, quickly: "Mr. Kayton, didn't you promise me that you wouldn't make public what I said about Bruce coming back that night?"

He smiled.

"No, I didn't promise you, but I didn't make it public."

She clasped her hands with delight. Impulsively she cried:

"Oh, I'm so glad—because I trusted you—believed in you! Then it must have been Bruce."

She sank into the chair close to the desk and looked up at him with eyes in which there shone a soft light of gratitude for all he was doing for her. He looked at her in silent admiration for a moment, and then he said:

"Yes, I suppose he gave it out himself. Miss Masuret, if anything comes up again, or if I do anything that you don't understand, please don't lose faith in me. There may be several things about

this case that I'll never be able to explain to you. It's bad enough for you to have been dragged into it, and I want to save you all the annoyance I can."

Again she clasped her hands ecstatically.

"Oh, you're so good to me! I don't know what I'd do without you!"

He laughed as he retorted, quickly:

"Please—don't try to do without me!"

He had leaned forward as he said it, and there was a look in his eyes and an earnestness in his voice that made the girl's cheeks burn. She drew away slightly embarrassed, and the detective, noticing it, pulled himself up with a jerk. Amiably he went on:

"To me the pleasantest part of our work is the fact that we are usually able to help some one in trouble. We're different from police detectives. They're paid by society to punish the criminal. We are retained by the victims of the criminals for their protection. They are punishing the strong; we are protecting the weak."

She looked at him with a new interest. Quickly she said:

"Oh, I didn't realize that! You love your work, don't you?"

"Love it! Indeed I do! We are like doctors or surgeons. We go from case to case, or from operation to operation, helping the unfortunate and fighting the disease of crime." With a mischievous sigh he added: "And as in the case of the doctors—when our patients are well, and they've paid us—they soon forget us."

She made a quick motion of protest with her hand, and almost involuntarily exclaimed:

"Oh, I shall never forget *you!*"

Again he leaned forward and looked at her earnestly. In a low tone he murmured:

"I wish—"

But what he was about to say remained unfinished, for at that moment the office door was swung open and Joe entered unceremoniously.

"Gov'nor!"

"Well?" snapped Kayton, annoyed at the interruption.

The assistant made an eager, expressive gesture.

"The woman from Tolworthy's is here."

Kayton started. His manner underwent a quick change. Once more he was the detective, eager to seize and follow every possible clue in pursuit of his quarry. This new caller was too important to be allowed to get away. Hastily, he whispered:

"Just a minute, Joe. Take Miss Masuret into Leishman's office and have her wait there while I see the woman." Turning to the young girl, he added: "Miss Masuret, this may be very important. Please don't go until I see you again."

She rose docilely and, following the assistant, passed out into the office at the back. Kayton watched her until she disappeared, and then with a sigh he closed the door and went back to his desk. He wondered vaguely why he was so reluctant to have her leave the office, if only for a few minutes. He felt singularly happy when talking to her and looking into her innocent, soulful eyes. He was asking himself why he had never married, and if such a girl, had he met her sooner, might have tempted him. Then suddenly he pulled himself up with a jerk. When

there was serious business to be done he never allowed his mind to dwell on sentiment. Quickly he plunged again into the midst of the work on hand, and when Joe re-entered he found his employer busy preparing the stage-setting for the little comedy he was about to enact with the lady from Tolworthy's.

"Get that deep ink-well, Joe."

Rummaging about, the assistant finally found what was required and brought it to the desk. Kayton nodded approval.

"Where are the prepared blotters?" he whispered.

"Second drawer, I think."

Kayton opened the drawer and found some.

"Here we are!" he chuckled. Placing them on the desk by the side of the ink-well, he added:

"All ready, Joe!"

The young man started to leave the room. Kayton halted him.

"See that we're not disturbed. Don't let any one come in until I ring this bell. Then answer it yourself."

Seating himself at the desk, Kayton assumed the appearance of being very preoccupied signing letters. A moment later Joe re-entered ushering in a visitor.

"This way, please."

A woman of about forty entered and, after one quick, searching glance at the detective, stood still, looking curiously about her. She was plainly, even shabbily dressed, but she had a grand air, and her dignified bearing and the sad, melancholy expression on her wan face suggested that she had known better days.

Seeing that the detective did not look up or pay

any attention to her, she advanced timidly toward the desk. Joe pointed to a chair.

"Take a seat, madam. Mr. Kayton will be disengaged in just a moment."

"Thank you."

She sat down, and Joe went out, closing the door.

For a few moments there was a deep silence, broken only by the ticking of the office clock and the scratching of the detective's pen as he went on with the signing of his letters. The visitor moved about uneasily on her chair. Presently, without looking up, Kayton said:

"You've been referred to me by—" He paused a moment to again sign his name and added: "Mead & Tolworthy?"

The visitor turned slightly toward him. Quietly she said:

"Yes—I answered their advertisement."

Still pretending to be busy, the detective went on:

"You have some information concerning the person advertised for?"

"Yes."

He looked up for the first time since she entered, and for a moment he was startled: her likeness to Mary was extraordinary. Fixing her with a steady gaze, he said, quickly:

"Then you must know the name those initials N. M. stand for. We took that means of avoiding publicity. You're not a newspaper woman?"

She shook her head as she answered quietly:

"No—I am Nellie Marsh."

He bowed politely.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. Then, resuming work on his

correspondence as if not greatly surprised or impressed, he went on: "I suppose you have some proof of your identity besides your mere knowledge of the name?"

She took out a card and, rising, went over to the desk and handed it to him.

"My present name is Martin—Mrs. Martin."

Kayton took the bit of pasteboard and read it. Dubiously he asked:

"East Green Street? Not a very desirable neighborhood. Is that your present address?"

She nodded.

"Yes; I rent furnished rooms. It is very quiet there—and cheap."

Again he looked at her keenly.

"Furnished rooms?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mrs. Martin," he said, carelessly, "Mr. Argyle has left a considerable sum of money to Nellie Marsh for reasons that you doubtless know; so we have taken this rather unusual way of getting in touch with you. Did you expect to be a beneficiary under the will?"

She hesitated a moment before replying. Then quietly she said:

"The legacy has been left to me because of an obligation on Mr. Argyle's part to my dead husband, who assisted him at a time when he greatly needed money. There are personal reasons why I don't care to make myself known to the family, and if I can receive this money without any inconvenient curiosity, I should be very glad to have it."

He nodded.

"That can be arranged. All we need is a proof of identity. Have you received money from Mr. Argyle before?"

"Yes—for a good many years."

"Did you sign receipts?"

"No. . . ."

"Did you ever write to Mr. Argyle?"

Again she hesitated before answering:

"Not recently."

"I ask because it may save a great deal of red tape if we could establish the identity by signature. Otherwise, I suppose you will have to obtain a copy of your birth certificate, make affidavits, and procure witnesses to satisfy the executors and the Probate Court."

The visitor shifted uneasily about on her chair.

"Wouldn't that involve a good deal of expense?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose it would—yes. Do you think your signature might be found among his papers?"

"Why, yes; my indorsement of checks—if he kept them."

In a manner quite cool and unconcerned, Kayton rose from his seat and politely invited her to come behind the desk and take his place. With assumed carelessness, he said:

"Well, then, if you'll leave your signature with me I'll turn it over to the lawyers."

"Thank you," she smiled.

Not suspecting the trap, the visitor removed her glove and, going behind the desk, took the detective's seat, while Kayton stood by, apparently

with great politeness, and placed a piece of paper for her to write on. Suddenly he dipped a pen deep into the ink-well, and then, as quickly, and as though absent-mindedly, placed the wet pen in her fingers. She took the proferred pen without looking, and, finding it was wet and had inked her hand, dropped it with a little exclamation of dismay, holding up her blackened hand with consternation. Instantly Kayton bent over her shoulder, and carefully dried her hand on the specially prepared blotter, securing a good impression.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "Don't get it on your glove. Let me. I always forget about that ink-well. Try this pen."

Handing her another pen, he passed behind her and threw the inked blotter into the waste-paper basket, after which he resumed his first position near her. Dipping the new pen gingerly into the ink-well, she wrote out her name. Again he bowed politely.

"Thank you. That 'll be all."

Rising from the chair, the visitor turned to go.

"You have my address. I'll hear from you?"

Meantime Kayton had picked up the caller's visiting-card and stood reading it.

"Yes," he replied. Then, as if an idea had suddenly struck him, he added: "Just a moment, Mrs. Martin." She stopped short, and he went on: "I'm in a very peculiar position, and it has just occurred to me here you might help me."

"I?"

"I suppose you've followed the newspaper reports of Mr. Argyle's death and our investigation?"

"Yes—closely."

It did not escape his well-trained eye that she gave an almost imperceptible start at the mention of the murder. Not letting her see that he noticed it, he continued:

"Then you have seen that suspicion has been directed against his adopted daughter?"

Moving farther toward the door, her head averted so he could not see her face, she replied:

"Yes—it seemed to me very cruel."

He nodded as he went on emphatically:

"Exactly. Miss Masuret must be protected from the daily annoyance of reporters and photographers. The poor girl's on the point of breaking down. You know even an innocent woman will do and say things to implicate herself if she's tried beyond the limit of her strength."

The visitor gave a little gasp and staggered to a seat.

"Yes—yes—of course," she said, sympathetically.

Watching her closely, Kayton continued:

"She is so watched that it is impossible for us to get her away anywhere without its being known, and yet it is necessary for our purposes to make the real criminal confident that we are off the trail. To be frank with you, we suspect a former member of the household."

"Indeed?" she said, guardedly, but in a tone that suggested she was anxious to learn more.

Kayton was silent for a moment. Then he went on:

"We want Miss Masuret to disappear, and to disappear so completely that not even a member of

her own household will suspect that we have anything to do with it. Any flight by train would be instantly found out. It must be secret and sensational. Her closest friends must be in a state of the greatest alarm. Do you follow me?"

"Yes—yes—but—"

Without waiting to hear her objections, he went on:

"Well, then you must see yourself, Mrs. Martin, that you are in just the right position to help us. Your relations with the family are absolutely unknown. I am sure I could trust to your discretion. No one connected with her would ever connect her with you, and you can receive her without explanation to any one as a total stranger into one of your furnished rooms."

She shook her head as, with averted face, she replied:

"Mr. Kayton, that's something I wouldn't like to undertake."

"Why not?" he asked, sharply. "Your house is respectable, isn't it?"

Again she hesitated.

"Why, yes—"

"All I ask is secrecy," he went on.

There was an expression of genuine distress on her face as she replied:

"The responsibility would be so—besides, as I told you, I am not known to any members of the family, and I don't wish to be. There are reasons—it doesn't seem necessary to go into them—"

"Not at all," he interrupted, quickly. "I will simply introduce you to Miss Masuret as some one

connected with this office whom I have chosen for this purpose."

"But you hardly know me—I might not be the right sort of person at all," she objected.

He smiled encouragingly.

"I have been studying you. I'm a fair judge of character; I know I can trust you."

She wrung her hands, as if at a loss what to say, unwilling to do what he asked, yet afraid to refuse.

"But, Mr. Kayton—" she stammered.

He interrupted her.

"Even if you had not this sense of gratitude to Mr. Argyle, which I'm sure you must feel, I know I can rely on your sympathy as a woman for a poor girl in a very desperate plight."

A silence followed, during which the detective and his visitor looked fixedly at each other, each trying to read the other's thoughts.

Did this man, this detective, know when he made this strange request that she could not refuse, that her instinct as a mother urged her to go at once to Mary and clasp the poor child to her bosom? Alas, that happiness she could never know again! The past was forever buried! The girl must never know that her mother was still living. Yet, if her anonymity could be preserved, why should she not protect her to the extent of her power? It could do no harm. Her associates could not grudge her that little happiness, and certainly Friederick would deny her nothing. Growing impatient at the delay, Kayton asked, coldly:

"Well, what is your decision?"

Still wavering, undecided, she looked at him for

a moment in silence. Then all at once, as if she had made up her mind that it would be dangerous to refuse anything to this man, from whom thick walls and bolts and bars had no secrets, she asked, suddenly:

"When do you want her to come?"

"Now!" he replied, firmly.

"Now—right away?" she echoed, in dismay.

Kayton rose from his desk and pressed an electric-bell button.

"She is here, waiting to see me."

"Here—she's here?" exclaimed Mrs. Martin, with emotion. Rising quickly, she asked: "I am to see her?"

He pretended not to notice her agitation, and his face was turned from her as he answered, carelessly:

"Yes. I would like her to go home with you now. I'll see her first and explain everything."

At that moment the door of the outer office opened, and Joe appeared in answer to the bell. Kayton pointed to his caller.

"Joe, give Mrs. Martin a chair in the inner office, make her very comfortable, and see that she is not disturbed."

"Yes, sir."

Mrs. Martin followed the assistant out, and the door closed behind them. Immediately his visitor had disappeared, Kayton opened a drawer in his desk and took out the photographic print of the finger-impressions on the table in the Argyle library. Then, picking from the waste-paper basket, where he had thrown it, the blotter marked with the impression of his visitor's hands, he hastily compared

the two. He was thus engaged when his assistant returned.

"Be careful of that woman, Joe," he said, warningly.

"Is it Miss Masuret's mother?" demanded the young man, eagerly.

"Can't you see the family likeness in the face?"

Advancing on tiptoe to the desk, the young man inquired:

"Did you get her finger-prints?"

"Did I?" laughed Kayton, studying the two with a magnifying-glass.

"Are they mates?"

Suddenly the chief gave a joyful exclamation.

"Good God! Look, Joe!"

The assistant gave one look, and then uttered a stifled whoop of triumph.

"Gee!"

Without waiting to see or hear more he jumped for the door and disappeared. Kayton, much amused, picked up the telephone.

"Leishman!"

The next instant the manager entered the office. Quickly the chief gave him orders. Giving him Mrs. Martin's card, he said:

"Tell Nash to start his men on this house in East Green Street right away. Get a room next door so as to take in wires from a detectaphone. Have them shadow and report to me everybody that connects with the place. Tell them to go slow and keep under cover. Get me Miss Masuret."

"Yes, sir."

Going to the door, he called out:

"Oh, Miss Masuret!"

Mary appeared on the threshold and slowly advanced into the office. Immediately Leishman went out, closing the door. Kayton, seated at his desk, beckoned to the young girl to approach. Gravely, yet with a note of triumph in his voice that he could not entirely conceal, he said:

"Miss Masuret, I have found the woman who was in the room when Mr. Argyle was killed."

The girl started and turned pale.

"A woman!" she exclaimed.

He nodded.

"I have absolute proof of it here in her finger-prints."

She turned quickly, as if about to leave the office.

"Oh, we must tell Bruce!"

Kayton shook his head.

"Not yet. I have no reason for thinking that this woman committed the murder. She may be innocent. But she knows who did it, and we can find it out through her."

"How?" she asked, breathlessly.

He looked at her in silence for a moment. Then, slowly and earnestly, he said:

"I'm going to ask you to do something that will take all your courage."

"Yes—yes!"

"And I know I can rely on you."

"What can I do?" she demanded, eagerly.

"The people who are responsible for the murder of Mr. Argyle are all, as we say, under cover—they're keeping away from each other. And even if we had them all separately under surveillance,

no amount of shadowing would connect them with each other or with this crime. We must take them off guard. Do you understand?"

She listened, greatly interested.

"Yes—yes!"

He continued:

"We must do something at once to confirm all the suspicions against you. We must make it seem that you have practically admitted your guilt."

The girl opened wide her eyes.

"How?" she asked.

"By flight. I want you to disappear."

"Disappear?" she echoed, breathlessly, as she sank into a seat.

He nodded.

"Yes. This woman's name is Martin. She keeps a furnished lodging-house. There are reasons why she has consented to take you as a lodger secretly. We must gain access to this house without arousing suspicion, and we can do it through you. I can visit you there myself—my men can come. You'll have nothing to fear. You'll be protected every moment. I will send you one of these little detectaphones."

"A detectaphone!"

"Yes, it's like a telephone, only much more sensitive. It's a wonderful little instrument. Conceal it in your room. Drop the wire out of your window, and my men will connect with it. You must go away without letting Bruce or Mrs. Wyatt or your maid—in fact, any one—know where you are. Will you trust me enough to let me involve you

this way publicly and then clear you when we find the real criminal?"

"Yes—"

He saw that she hesitated, and he hastened to reassure her.

"I would never let you do this unless I were absolutely sure that you will be safe and that I can clear you later."

"Don't think about that," she said, quickly. "I'll do anything you say."

He rose from his seat. Earnestly he said:

"Thank you. Mrs. Martin is here. Will you go now?"

The girl trembled, but bravely she said:

"Yes, I will go."

As he pressed an electric button, he said:

"You understand that if you do the slightest thing to betray yourself, everything fails."

"I won't fail you," she replied, firmly.

As she spoke, the assistant entered. Kayton looked up.

"Joe, bring in Mrs. Martin."

The young man went out, and the detective turned to Mary.

"Have you money enough with you?"

"Yes." Then all at once she burst out: "Oh—I dread to meet her!"

She looked at him as if expecting some expression of sympathy, but there was no sentiment in him now. His head was filled only with business. Coldly he answered:

"I must ask you to show no feeling of repulsion for this woman."

"I won't, I won't," she gasped in a whisper.

Steps were heard approaching. The dreaded meeting was at hand. Mary gripped hold of the chair near her and stood rigidly waiting. The door opened, and Mrs. Martin entered.

Instantly the woman's eyes sought the young girl, and as she staggered rather than walked forward there was in her line-marked face an expression of dread, curiosity, and yearning maternal affection in spite of her effort at self-command. She halted and stood still, her eyes fixed on Mary.

Kayton, busy at his desk, pretended to notice nothing. In a businesslike manner, he said:

"Mrs. Martin, this is Miss Masuret."

Again the woman advanced, this time her hands outstretched. Her lips trembling, her voice betraying the supreme effort she was making to remain calm, she said, very gently:

"My dear, will you come with me?"

At the word, Mary relaxed slowly and turned and looked at her. Then, as if unconsciously drawn to her, she crossed over to the stranger, and put a hand in the one outstretched to receive it, and so they stood for a moment looking earnestly into each other's eyes, while Kayton sat as if still preoccupied at his desk.

CHAPTER XIV

EAST GREEN STREET, Manhattan, had an unsavory reputation. It boasted of being the wickedest street of its size in the world. The favorite resort of gunmen and desperadoes of all kinds, it was known to the police as one of the plague spots in the city, and although from time to time public clamor had been raised to clean the thoroughfare out, nothing had been done. Thanks to political pull enjoyed by the local dive-keepers, there was open defiance of law and decency, and all kinds of dangerous joints had been permitted to run wide open in the neighborhood. In the very center of the big town's most congested and vicious district, just off the Bowery, it was the preferred haunt of every known variety of crook. Burglars, pickpockets, confidence men, prostitutes, cadets—all met here in obscure, sinister saloons to plot and scheme new jobs in this sordid clearing-house of crime.

Not only was it one of the foulest, but it was also one of the narrowest and tortuous thoroughfares in the metropolis. Unlike most New York streets, it did not run in a straight line, but followed a curved, zigzag course through the foulest of the city's slums. The ill-paved roadway, never cleaned or flushed, was full of cesspools and refuse which, having been allowed to rot in the rain and sun, sent up a stench

that shrieked to heaven. On either side towered grim, hideous tenements with broken windows patched with paper, rusty fire-escapes littered with rubbish, and dark, sinister halls, the plaster of which had long since fallen in great chunks, exposing the wooden lathing. In the daytime, when the sunlight invaded every nook and corner, exposing the filth and squalor in its most hideous aspect, there was little vestige of life. Occasionally a half-starved cat limped across the road in hope of scratching a meal out of a heap of decaying garbage, and from time to time sounds of drunken revelry issued from behind tightly closed shutters. Otherwise, the street appeared deserted by God and man.

One house alone showed indications of being occupied. A trifle less dilapidated than its neighbors, it was a four-story building with a high stoop and a heavy door always kept locked. Its occupants were seldom if ever seen out. At times a face would appear at a window and was as instantly withdrawn if any chance passer happened to glance that way. At night lights glimmered behind the closely shut shutters of the attic floor, apparently the only part of the house inhabited. If one stood outside under cover of a hallway and watched the house long enough, the inmates might be seen slinking forth under cover of the darkness of night, passing furtively in and out, ever careful to glance behind to see if they were followed.

To-day again there was a face at the attic window, the face of a woman once beautiful, but now worn and haggard, seamed with indelible lines of time and sorrow. Cautiously opening the wooden shutter, she

leaned out and looked up and down the street as if expecting some one. In a few minutes, tired of the vigil, she withdrew into the room, and sank wearily onto a sofa.

The room, such as it was, was shabbily and scantily furnished—a small cheap table in the center, a few rickety chairs, and a broken-down couch. A window looked onto the street, and in the ceiling was a trap-door leading to the roof, with ladder ready for use. A door at the far end of the room led to the dark staircase outside.

Mrs. Martin glanced anxiously at the battered timepiece which ticked noiselessly on the mantel. Seven o'clock. It was time Friederick returned. Could anything have happened? Was it possible that the police had discovered their hiding-place and arrested him before he had finished the new ten-dollar counterfeit which was to make them rich enough to give up this dangerous game for good and go away to some distant country where they might both enjoy the few years still left to them?

When Helen Masuret had realized one day that she had ceased to care for her crippled husband and that the handsome, fascinating Friederick Kreisler had completely won her heart, she did not hesitate to make the last sacrifice a woman can. No scruples of honor or conscience deterred her or were allowed to stand in the way of her mad infatuation. A few brief words hastily penned, and she left her home and baby daughter forever to follow the fortunes of the man she loved. She had paid no heed to what was openly said about Kreisler. What cared she that he was a gentlemanly crook who sooner or later would

get his deserts? She only knew that she loved this tall, picturesque, masterful man, whose keen intelligence, undaunted courage, unquestioned ability had defied the police of two hemispheres. She ran away with him, and for a long time the romance was all that she had dreamed. That was twenty years ago. To-day they were still together. Passion's fires had cooled somewhat, yet she loved Kreisler as much as ever. The years, however, had left their mark. In her heart she knew she had been an unfaithful wife, an unworthy mother. Even her love for Kreisler, unselfish as it had been, could not atone for that, and the knowledge of her base degradation had eaten into her soul and left her at the age of forty an embittered, broken-hearted woman. To-day what was there left to her? Only traces of her one-time beauty and the regrets of a life that she herself had shattered. Her husband was long since dead, and her little daughter, now full grown to womanhood and adopted by a millionaire, was living in the same city, unconscious of her mother's existence. Oh, the agony of it! Many a time had she stood for hours watching John Argyle's residence merely in the hope of seeing Mary from the distance. She knew she could never claim her. Even if the law gave her the right, she would not exercise it. The people she associated with were no fit companions for a pure young girl. She would never let her learn that her mother was the associate of criminals.

Again she glanced at the clock. Half past seven! Now she was really alarmed. Something must have happened. Suddenly a noise made her sit up with

a start. An electric buzzer, carefully concealed over the transom of the door, was emitting a loud, crackling sound, giving warning of some one's approach. Who was it? Her heart in her mouth, she ran out on the landing and, looking over the shaky bannisters, gave an exclamation of joy. It was Friederick. A moment later the counterfeiter entered the room.

A man in the early fifties, tall, thin, and rather gaunt, Friederick Kreisler would have attracted immediate attention anywhere. A leonine head was crowned by a mass of iron-gray hair, not long, but picturesquely disheveled. His eyes were intense, and flashed like living coals under heavy dark brows. Distinguished in appearance, with a smooth, intellectual-looking face, few could have guessed that the greater part of this man's life had been spent in prison, and that he was one of the most expert and dangerous counterfeiters that ever gave trouble to the United States government.

He smiled wearily as he came in and saw who was there to greet him. His face was pale, his features drawn. He stooped slightly, and had a harassing cough.

"I was so anxious, dear," she faltered. "I was afraid they'd got you."

Again he smiled—the tired smile of a man who realizes that the end is not far off, that the battle is nearly ended, and that in a little while nothing will matter very much. He kissed her in silence and stroked her hair tenderly.

"My dear heart, you are very tired," he murmured.

She looked beseechingly up into his face.

"Friederick, I want you to give it all up. Let's go away!"

Drawing slightly away, he looked down at her with surprise. Almost reproachfully he said:

"Where is your courage, my dear? Where is your courage?"

She averted her face so he should not see her tears, and sank down in a chair near the table.

"I don't know, Friederick. I'm terribly afraid. I'm panic-stricken. There's been too much — too much—Argyle's death—"

He held up his hand warningly.

"'Ssh!"

Tearfully she went on:

"And yesterday with that detective! Oh, I shouldn't have gone there!"

Hanging up his coat and changing it for a lighter one, Kreisler made an exclamation of impatience.

"That was Hurley's advice! Always greedy for money!"

She shook her head.

"No. I risked it myself—for the money—honest money. I wanted to be able to say to you: 'Here, now we have enough. Let us cut loose from this life—from all these people.' Friederick, I want to be safe!"

He laughed carelessly as he unlocked a secret drawer in the table and lifted out a tin box which he also leisurely unlocked.

"Foolish little fears," he said. "We are safe enough here. Think of all the years that I've spent to make us safe." Raising the lid of the box and taking out a new ten-dollar bill, he held it up exultingly:

"Look at it—isn't it perfect! I could pass that even to the experts of the Treasury. It will be the first time in the history of the world, and it is I who shall do it! In a few weeks the whole country will be flooded with them—Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, New Orleans, Boston, and New York—all on the same day! Then we can go out with the whole world for our playground."

She shook her head as she replied bitterly:

"Yes! Yes! But we shall always be hunted—hunted wherever we go. We can never get away from it. It's too big, Friederick—it's too big. They'd never let a man who could make a bill like that escape. You know that if one of these men were caught he'd betray you to save himself. The government would pardon him—would pardon them all—to get you. Safe! Every prison in the world would be yawning for you."

He listened in silence while he put the counterfeit note away again and carefully relocked the box. When she mentioned the word "prison" the lines about his mouth tightened. Calmly yet determinedly he said:

"I shall never go to prison again! If I'm caught I'll kill myself."

With a sound that was like a sob she cried:

"Then I hope to God you'll kill me, too, Friederick. I'd never have the courage to kill myself, and it would be the end of everything for me."

Leaning forward on the table, she let her head fall on her outstretched arms, and remained there motionless, a pathetic figure of an unhappy, broken woman.

His eyes moistened as he watched her. His heart bled for this woman who had sacrificed everything for him. Caressing her, he said, gently:

"Ah, you are the great soul! You gave up everything for me. You left everybody. You gave up even your little daughter. You shared prison with me, and I—I am the selfish one! And now, when I say I would take my life, you would share death with me! Ah, you are the great soul!"

Raising her head, she looked up and smiled at him through her tears.

"Oh, if I could only make you feel as I do! I'm so depressed! Friederick, this is a great thing that you've invented—this process of color photography. Think what can be done with it. It would bring fame to you and an honest fortune."

He nodded.

"Yes, my love, in an honest world. But they would cheat me. They would steal it; and, see, I must have money to finance it—to protect it. Then when all this blows over—in Germany, perhaps—who knows?"

She shook her head. Sadly she said:

"I'm growing too old to play the game any longer."

He smiled kindly at her, and his hand caressed her hair as he answered:

"That will never be. It is not we who grow old. It is the little fat life that gathers gray mold like a cheese. You and I, *mein herz*, we keep young with living—loving! Fear, trouble, disgrace, prison, separation, poverty, love, happiness, hope, wealth—that is to live."

"Oh, I know, Friederick! You love the gamble—the danger—you love it better than safety and happiness. Now when we could have each other, a little money—this legacy—to live on, you'll go ahead this way and risk your life and my life. If we're caught it's nothing but the snap of a trigger to you, but to me it would be years and years of hateful, empty life alone."

She rose and, going over to the window, stood looking out into the street.

"How shall a man change himself? It's the adventure in me you love," he went on.

"No, no, it isn't that. I would go through anything with you or for you, but this means that I'm risking you! I know you would kill yourself without a thought that you would be leaving me."

He rose and approached her. Earnestly he said:

"I tell you I can never go to prison again with those brutes to be flogged and degraded. I came out after those ten years of torture, all the color gone out of my skin, all the life gone out of my legs! I came out after those ten years to get even with the world, and they shall never put their dirty hands on me again while I am alive!"

She made an exclamation of terror and staggered a step toward him, unable to speak, holding out her hand in silent protest. Already regretting the selfish brutality of his speech, he made a quick step forward and seized her in his arms. Soothingly he exclaimed:

"*Mein Liebschen*, what difference would it make? If they catch me now they would never let me free to be with you again. I would die then by inches."

She threw her arms around his neck.

"Oh, if you'd only listen to me—if you'd only come away—if you'd only come away!"

As she spoke the electric buzzer again gave out its warning. Some one had entered the house and was coming up the stairs. Quickly Kreisler put the box inside the table and slipped a revolver in his pocket. Some one was coming. Was it friend or foe?

CHAPTER XV

ASCHE KAYTON chuckled. At last he had hit the right trail. Friederick Kreisler and his fellow-counterfeiters were as good as behind the bars. So much for that part of the Argyle case. There still remained the murder, the most important phase of the problem. The question as to who actually killed John Argyle was still as deep a mystery as on the morning the body was discovered, but the scent was getting hotter every hour, and the detective was convinced that the capture of the counterfeiters would lead right to the murderer. He was confident that the dead banker was in some way mixed up with the gang, and that they knew more about his death than they cared to admit.

It was part of Kayton's method to do nothing hastily. To insure complete success for the raid there must be no mistakes. Careful preparations were necessary. Nothing must be left to chance. Miss Masuret was already installed as a boarder at No. 20 East Green Street, and through her enough had already been gleaned to know that the house was the headquarters of as desperate a gang of crooks as ever wore convict stripes. Under pretense of calling on the young girl, and not sorry for the opportunity thus afforded of seeing her again, Kayton himself had been able to see and get the lay of the

premises, and during these visits he contrived, with Joe's agile assistance, to make elaborate preparations preliminary to a spectacular raid. The greatest secrecy had to be observed. Constantly on the watch, guarded by their lookouts and electric buzzers, Kreisler and his associates considered themselves immune. If they had known Kayton better, they would have been less confident and doubled their vigilance. As it was, they suspected nothing and continued working with a sense of full security.

The preparations took time, but they were imperative. It would have been simple enough to surround the house and make arrests wholesale, but Kayton would not then have learned what he wanted to know. He had conceived the idea, and it was one that grew stronger each minute, that if he could only listen and overhear the members of the gang talking he would have something that would lead right to the man who killed Mr. Argyle. Feeling quite secure and secluded in their attic, so far from prying ears, the counterfeiters talked freely. This conversation they must listen to, and there was only one way to do it. They must install the detectaphone, and have several of his own men concealed at the other end of the wire taking down every word verbatim. Once the idea conceived, he quickly carried it out, and, aided by his operatives, he profited one day by the house being deserted to install this astonishing little instrument, the most sensitive transmitter of sound known to modern science. It was Kayton who had first used the apparatus in his work and attracted attention to its possibilities as a detector of crime. Most of his convictions, especially in the graft cases,

had been secured by its use, and he himself was enthusiastic in its praise. For all detective purposes or use wherever secret observation and reporting of conversation is necessary he had proved it invaluable. By its use his operator at the receiving end was enabled to hear every audible sound made in the room where the transmitter was concealed. Conversation carried on in undertones and even whispers was distinctly heard a long distance away. Two pairs of receivers could be used, thus securing corroborative evidence. The transmitter was so constructed that it caught and transmitted sounds that were scarcely distinguishable to the human ear; whispers and undertones that could not be heard under normal conditions a few feet away were readily picked up and transmitted by this instrument to listeners stationed a considerable distance off. The receivers reproduced the natural tones used by the persons at the transmitting end of the line, and they could be so tuned that the voice was magnified many times.

After considerable difficulty Kayton had succeeded in concealing the transmitter in the Kreisler attic when there was no possible danger of its being discovered, and the wire he had carried into the adjoining house, the entire top floor of which he had rented for the purpose. There his operatives, seated night and day at the receivers, heard every word the counterfeiters said, and secured the evidence on which Kayton obtained the warrant for his raid. Keeping themselves well hidden, he and his men had for days watched the coming and going of the gang. With the faces of several of them Kayton was already familiar. Post-graduates in crime, the pictures of

most of them were in the rogues' gallery. There was Simeon Gage, alias One-Lunged Simmie, morphine fiend and pickpocket, a lanky, cadaverous, flashily dressed individual so nicknamed because he was in the last stages of consumption. He also recognized Bill Skidd, known as Ugly Bill, a burly, pugnacious tough who had often done time. Kreisler, the leader of the gang, he had never seen before, but directly he caught sight of that square, determined jaw, that stern face and intense deep-set eyes, he realized that he had to deal with as desperate a customer as he had ever encountered.

But Kayton was not afraid. He had never known what the word fear meant. On the contrary, it stimulated him to feel that at last he was about to meet a foe worthy of his steel. The stronger the forces he was fighting, the more satisfaction there was in worsting them. He had only one regret, which was that he had been obliged to expose Miss Masuret to the anger and vengeance of the gang. If they suspected for a moment that she made daily reports of what was going on, her life would not be worth a moment's purchase. He had thrown about her every protection possible. At all times she was close to the detectaphone transmitter. A whisper from her that matters were becoming critical, and he and his men would at once break into the place and rescue her. He realized, however, that it was not as easy as it sounded. It would take time to break in, and much could happen in a very few moments. He could only trust that everything would go as he wanted it to, and that they would be able to take the gang by complete surprise.

Yet it worried him to feel that the young girl was exposed to danger, and what astonished and worried him even more was to find that he cared. He had been so long a bachelor that it never occurred to him that he was capable of taking more than a passing interest in any woman. A man in his business, fighting desperate characters with his back to the wall, had little time for the milder, sweeter interests of life. The terms "love," "wife," "home" were to him only empty phrases. A soldier, fighting society's battle with the forces of evil, he had never stopped to think there was a quieter, more peaceful kind of existence that might appeal to him more. This girl, with her quiet, refined manner, her patience and gentleness under all kinds of provocation, had from the outset gained his sympathy. Then, as each day he learned to know her better, he recognized what an exceptional nature hers was. During the day he found himself thinking of her when he should have been thinking only of his work. Strange unusual thoughts surged madly through his brain. Why should not he too marry and be settled and happy like other men? It was just such a girl as this that he would like for his wife.

The trying task of keeping a constant vigil and listening in silence to every word uttered next door Kayton had intrusted to six of his best operatives, and they were on duty night and day, three men working in the daytime, the others at night. They sat there in grim silence, the metal receivers glued to their heads and connected with the house next door by wires running out of the window.

It was a tedious task, watching and listening, and

the kind of work that got on the nerves. Joe urged an immediate raid, but Kayton's prudence and longer experience prompted him to wait. The moment had not yet come.

One day their watching was rewarded beyond all expectation. Kayton was at the receiver of the detectaphone, listening to scraps of conversation, when suddenly some one laughed. Instantly the detective pricked up his ears. He knew only one man who could laugh like that—a boisterous, coarse laugh which reminded one of a horse neighing. There could be no mistake. It was Mr. Hurley, the dead banker's legal adviser. What was he doing in that den of thieves? The suspicion the detective had from his first talk with the man returned all at once with redoubled force. If Hurley knew these crooks and had dealings with them, it was more than probable that he knew more about the murder than he had admitted. Kayton felt a thrill run down his spine. The scent was getting hotter every minute. He began to feel that the murderer of John Argyle was within his reach.

He strained every nerve to listen, in the hope that he would hear something that would confirm his suspicions, but the conversation was general and punctuated from time to time with the lawyer's laugh. The only definite thing he could overhear was that they were all to meet again the following evening. That was enough for Kayton. The moment for the raid had come.

"It's for to-morrow night, Joe!" he whispered to his assistant. "Get your men ready."

CHAPTER XVI

THE next twenty-four hours found the watchers still at their posts. During the day not a sound came from the counterfeiters' den. Everything was as quiet as if the place had been abandoned. Either the inmates were all asleep or had gone out. Not an instant, however, did the operatives relax their vigilance. They knew that Kayton and Joe, who had crept in and concealed themselves next door to make sure the wire connections were all right, would be heard from directly the coast was clear. Meantime, their ears fastened to the detectaphone receivers, they listened eagerly for the slightest sound.

Final preparations had been made to raid the place at nine o'clock that evening, when it was reasonably certain that most of the gang, including Mr. Hurley, would be present. Everything had been carefully planned; not a detail overlooked. In addition to the three operatives taking down on the detectaphone every word uttered and who at the critical moment would take a hand in the final rush, Kayton had twelve plain-clothes men down-stairs in the street and back yard and half a dozen more on the roof. In fact, the place was completely surrounded by armed, determined officers. The crooks had not the slightest chance of making a "get-away."

Kayton had decided to remain himself on the

counterfeiters' premises throughout. It involved considerable personal risk to the final success of the raid, but he had never stopped to consider peril. His presence in the house was necessary for two reasons. First, in order to direct his operatives, he must be in a position to judge of the exact moment to break in and give the final signal to his men. Secondly, he must be there to protect Mary in case of trouble. He could not possibly leave the girl there alone to face the wrath of the gang when they realized that they had been betrayed.

Every day he realized more that this girl, with her quiet, gentle manner, was taking a firmer hold on his affections. Was it a deeper feeling than sympathy and friendship that he had for her? When a man gets to the age of forty without having met the woman he cares enough about to marry, he is apt to be distrustful of his feelings when the right girl does come along. He only knew that he could not banish her from his thoughts, and that he felt singularly elated and happy when with her, and just as depressed when she was away. Was it possible that he, the cynical, blasé man of the world, the hardened old bachelor, was falling in love like a timid school-boy? It seemed ridiculous, almost unbelievable, but there it was. There was nó doubt about it. He was absurdly, irrationally, hopelessly in love. Did she care for him? He did not know, although it had seemed to him that there was something in the tone of her voice, in the glance of her eye when she spoke to him, quite different to when she was addressing others. Well, he was not a man to beat about the bush or to break his heart over a

woman who did not care for him. The first opportunity he got he would find out just how he stood in her estimation. Meantime, sterner work was before him. There was little time now to be lost on sentiment.

Next door the three operatives sat motionless, waiting for some sign, listening patiently for a signal that everything was all right. Nash was nodding in his chair, while Cortwright puffed leisurely at a cob pipe. Sinclair, his long legs up on the table, sat at the end of the detectaphone receiver, also dozing.

"I wonder why the boss don't call us? He must be next door all this time."

Nash looked up.

"Say, Bob, is your detectaphone working?"

"Not yet. Is yours?"

"Not a sound. But don't worry; they'll be working overtime pretty soon."

Sinclair made a quick gesture with his hand.

"Hush, boys! I hear voices. Some one's coming in."

CHAPTER XVII

EVERYTHING was quiet as the grave in the Kreisler attic. As usual at this time, the place had been deserted all day. Only in the evening, when darkness favored their movements being unobserved, did the members of the gang emerge from their rat-holes and come to see their leader. Mrs. Martin was out getting food and beer for the evening meal. Kreisler himself had not arrived yet. But it would not be long before they came. It was already growing dark. There was no time to be lost.

The clock was already on the stroke of seven when there was the sound of a key being cautiously inserted in the door. The next instant Joe poked his head in. Seeing that the room was empty, he made a gesture behind him, and Kayton appeared, followed closely by Mary. Both men carried small electric flashlights which enabled them to see.

Kayton advanced boldly and flashed his light here and there, curious to inspect further this nest of criminals. Turning to Mary, he whispered:

"You're sure they are all out?"

She nodded.

"Yes. I saw them go."

He pointed to the landing and whispered:

"Just watch the stairs for us. They may return any minute."

She went as directed and stood on guard at the door through which they had entered. Quickly Kayton turned to his assistant.

"Say, Joe, connect that detectaphone out of the window. Be careful!" Grimly the detective went on: "That was classy work of yours, my boy—lifting Mrs. Martin's handbag with all her keys."

Joe grinned. Moving about the room, flashing his light over the table and cupboards, he replied:

"She certainly did keep her hooks on it. I had so much trouble getting it, I hate to part with it."

Kayton smiled approvingly.

"Joe, you're getting to be a first-class dip."

Throwing up the window, the young man nimbly climbed out onto the fire-escape. Laughingly he retorted:

"Well, I'm a better pickpocket than Sam. He chased her every time she put her nose out of this house yesterday. It took me only two hours. I didn't have to give up my cover to any department-store sleuth, either."

Opening one of the cupboards, Kayton threw his flashlight all round.

"I'd like to search this rat-hole thoroughly."

"Guess you've got time enough, gov'nor. They won't miss the bag till they're through dinner. And they may hang around there, trying to get one of the waiters pinched."

"Not much. They won't want to have any more attention paid to them by the police than they can avoid."

Suddenly Mary, at the door, made a slight exclamation of warning:

"Hush!"

"What is it?" asked Kayton, in a tense whisper and ready for any emergency.

"It's all right," she whispered. "I thought I heard some one."

The detective turned again to his assistant.

"Joe, you're getting to be a great plumber."

The young man chuckled. As he tested the wires out on the fire-escape, he said:

"Well, we're going to get great results with this detectaphone; this one's going to be the live wire, all right."

"Be careful, Joe. Break your neck if you want to, but don't break that wire."

"I don't want to break either, thank you."

After making sure that the connections were properly made outside, the young man attached the wire from the detectaphone with the loose end from next door. When the job was completed to his satisfaction, he looked up and said:

"The wire's connected, gov'nor."

Kayton turned to the dead wall behind which, in the next house, his operatives were waiting. In a low, perfectly natural tone he said:

"Boys, if the wires are working, and you hear me speaking, wave a handkerchief from your window."

Opening the window at the back, Joe thrust his head out to look for the expected signal. After a moment's wait he drew in his head and cried, exultantly:

"All right, gov'nor; they get it."

Still on guard at the door, Mary began to grow uneasy.

"Don't you think you ought to come now?" she whispered, anxiously.

Kayton held his hand out to his assistant.

"Give me that other 'phone, Joe." Then, going toward the young girl, he said: "Miss Masuret, here is the detectaphone. Conceal it in your room as I explained to you. Drop the wire out of the window, and my men will connect with it."

She nodded.

"I understand."

At that instant a whistle was heard in the street below. Quickly Joe turned to his chief.

"There's our signal, gov'nor. Kreisler and his gang are coming."

Kayton made a quick gesture.

"You go back to the other house by the roof and get on the detectaphone. Don't leave the receiver —you stick to it until you hear from me—and then obey it instantly."

"All right, gov'nor, I'll stick."

Mary turned to the detective in surprise.

"Aren't you going with him?"

"No," he answered, quickly; "I'm going to stay here with you."

"Oh, don't! They'll kill you!"

"I've heard that before," he smiled, grimly.

On top of the transom over the door the electric buzzer flashed and spit ominously. Not an instant was to be lost. Another moment and they would be discovered.

"What's that?" demanded Mary, alarmed at the noise made by the buzzer.

"That's their warning. They've got the front steps wired. There's some one at the street door now," quickly explained the detective, as he ran toward the door.

"What shall we do?" she asked, her large eyes opening wide with terror.

"We'll go right back to your room," he said, quickly.

"But they'll see us!"

"No—we've just time to get there."

Hurriedly they left the room, closing the door noiselessly behind them.

Next door the waiting operatives listened, but all was quiet again in the Kreisler flat. Nash thought that Kayton must have left. Suddenly there was a noise on the roof above their heads, as if a heavy body had dropped.

"What's that?" exclaimed Sinclair, nervously.

"That's all right," said Nash. "It's Joe. Kayton told him to go over the roof."

At that moment the assistant pulled up the hatch and appeared at the top of the ladder.

"Greetings, men!"

The operatives burst into a hearty laugh.

"Greetings, greetings!"

Coming quickly down the ladder, the young man laughed good-naturedly.

"You boys have got the soft end of it. I'm getting too fat for this tin-roof work." Taking off his hat and coat, he added: "What do you think of a

first-class detective doing second-story work in a third-class tenement? Here, Nash, give me that receiver."

"The damn thing's glued to my ear," growled Nash, trying to detach it.

He yanked the steel apparatus off and handed it to the new-comer, who, by Kayton's order, was in general charge.

Surrendering his place to Joe, the latter sat down and adjusted the receiver to his head. In a tense whisper he said:

"Now, boys, you want to sit tight. We may be in for some rough work."

As he spoke there was the sound of a door shutting next door. Joe held up a warning hand.

"Hush! They're here! Now they'll start to chatter, and when they do we've got 'em."

There followed a dead silence, broken only by the scratching pencils as the listening men started to write rapidly on their pads.

CHAPTER XVIII

KREISLER entered the attic, followed by a lanky, cadaverous-looking individual with an anemic, crafty-looking face. Dressed in the height of fashion affected by the flashy gentry of the underworld, he had on a tight-fitting check suit, low shoes, red socks and tie, and a rakish, flat-brimmed derby hat jauntily on the back of his head. A gold fob dangled from his waistcoat, and on his fingers were a couple of showy rings. A crafty, furtive expression on his face, Simeon Gage looked just what he was—one of the slickest pickpockets in the country. Addicted to morphine, his complexion was yellow and unwholesome, and from his lips hung the inevitable cigarette. Usually Simeon was in good humor, being the pampered baby of the gang; but to-day something had occurred to upset him. While Kreisler went forward to turn up the lamp, he grumbled:

"Say, Fred, we'll have to get all these locks changed, now Mrs. Martin's lost her bag. We might as well go to bed with the front door open."

The counterfeiter shrugged his shoulders. Indifferently he answered:

"There was nothing in the bag to show what house the keys fit."

Going over to the corner, the pickpocket threw himself on the sofa. Drolly he said:

"Yes, I know, Doctor, but I'm not for taking any chances. The dip that got her keys might see you coming out of here sometime, or he might see her in the street and follow her home. This isn't the sort of place we'd like to entertain a sneak-thief in—is it? He'd blackmail us for life!"

Kreisler laughed.

"You've got too much imagination for this business, Simmie. You ought to go back to your old confidence game."

Opening the closet, he took off his coat, hung it up, and slipped on a loose house-coat.

The pickpocket, still unsatisfied, sat bolt upright.

"Well, to tell ye the truth, I've been uneasy lately —ever since that girl came, in fact. Do ye know, I thought I was being shadowed yesterday—"

He stopped and looked admiringly down at his rings.

Kreisler smiled.

"You're always thinking you're being followed. You must have a bad conscience."

Removing the cloth from the table, the counterfeiter folded it carefully and placed it on a chair close by.

The pickpocket nodded. Dolefully he replied:

"I think p'haps I am hittin' too many cigarettes. I don't know what's wrong. Something certainly must be the matter if people can come and pick *our* pockets like that."

Rising from the sofa, he went over to the cupboard and stood near Kreisler. Still grumbling, he went on:

"Anyhow, I don't think we ought to have that girl here. Some cheap divorce-case detective will be

rounding us up next. Who is she, anyway? I called up Hurley and asked him about her. Why doesn't he know about her?"

Returning to the closet, Kreisler took out a pan and tools, which he carried to the table. Then going to a cupboard, he unlocked it and, taking out a bottle, poured some liquid into a measuring-glass. He listened in silence to his companion. After a pause he replied slowly:

"There was no time to tell him."

Gage pulled a grimace.

"You've had lots of chances to tell *me*."

Kreisler looked the youth full in the face. Calmly he said:

"It's none of your damned business, Simmie."

The pickpocket took the snub as gracefully as he could. Peevishly he said:

"Well, I feel nervous as a rabbit with that strange woman around."

Sitting down at the table, Kreisler picked up what looked like a brand-new ten-dollar bill and a pair of rubber gloves. Watching curiously his companion's preparations, Gage inquired:

"Are you going to work now?"

"Yes."

The crook made a step forward. Eagerly he said:

"Can I help you?"

"I think not," replied Kreisler, dryly. "I think I have everything I need. I'm just going to do a little bleaching."

Going again to the closet, the counterfeiter brought out a measuring-glass, two small bottles, and a

package of bogus banknotes, all of which he carried to the table.

The pickpocket stood watching him in silence for a moment. Then sullenly he said:

"Bleaching—you're always bleaching. Doctor, it peeves me—it near drives me dippy to see you washing the real money out of a perfectly good one-dollar bill."

He picked up one of the bills and fingered it, after which he replaced it on the table.

While Kreisler arranged a frame on the table for drying the bills, he went on peevishly:

"Your photographic process may be all right, but, damn it, wouldn't it be a whole lot cheaper if you'd fake the paper?"

Kreisler shrugged his shoulders and made no reply. Going again to the closet, he brought out a money-box and, drawing up a chair near the table, placed the box on it and unlocked it. After a pause he said:

"That is the way with you Americans. No patience, no science, no—artistry—half baked—get rich quick! Perfection is an affair of little things, but perfection is not a little thing."

Sitting at the table, he proceeded to draw on the right-hand rubber glove, while the pickpocket, overawed by the leader's superior manners and way of expressing himself, watched him admiringly. Finally, unable to contain his admiration, he burst out:

"Doctor, you've got a wonderful bunch of stuff in your nut. But I notice you're keepin' all you know right under your own hat. You don't do nothing but bleach when we're round. Some day

you'll go off to Scotland with your money, like Andy Carnegie, and leave us all workin' in the mills."

Kreisler made no answer, but went on working in silence. Presently he gave vent to an impatient exclamation.

"Damn these rubber gloves! I would like to be in the rubber trust. They put out a cheaper counterfeit than I would dare. Get me another pair from my room."

He threw the torn glove on the floor and proceeded to hang the wet bills on the frame.

Gage, stooping, picked up the glove. Soothingly he said:

"Never mind, Doctor. You're all right with your color photography, but I get tired sittin' round here waitin' for you to pull off your masterpieces. When are we goin' to start to shove 'em? I want to begin buyin' bonds in Wall Street."

Kreisler laughed. Drawing the rubber glove on his right hand, he replied:

"Be patient, Simmie, be patient. You shall, and we shall be paying for counterfeit with counterfeit! Counterfeit stock certificates for counterfeit gold certificates! There is nothing in the Treasury to back their stock certificates, and the government protects them and prosecutes us."

The pickpocket snickered.

"Doctor, that's the difference between promotin' and counterfeitin'." Rising from his seat, he added: "Well, I must be getting on the job. It's theater-hour in the street-cars. Bunch of swell guys all wearing glad rags and sparklers. I ought to be able to get some of 'em. Ta-ta! See you again, old sport."

Kreisler smiled grimly.

"Mind you don't get pinched."

Gage went toward the stairs. As he reached the door it opened, and Mrs. Martin entered carrying a number of paper bundles. Taking off his hat with a flourish, the pickpocket made a mock bow.

"Hello, mama! Been out getting us something good to eat, eh? Well, I'll be back to help you enjoy it. Count me in—count me in!"

Before she could answer him, he closed the door and ran down-stairs.

Mrs. Martin laughed and turned to Kreisler, who looked up and smiled. Checking her merriment, she laid down her bundles with a sigh, and, taking off her hat, proceeded to get ready for the evening meal. Beyond a brief greeting, the counterfeiter did not interrupt his work. With his gloved right hand he poured the contents of two small bottles into the pan and carefully stirred with a glass rod. When the mixture was to his satisfaction, he took up one of the freshly printed ten-dollar banknotes and immersed it in the bath.

Mrs. Martin watched him for a few moments in silence. Then, approaching the table, she put her arm round her husband's neck and lovingly rubbed her cheek against his.

"Always working—always working, aren't you, dear?"

Stopping for a moment, he tenderly patted her cheek with his left hand as he answered:

"We must work, dear, if we are to continue to live. What is life without work? A frightful, intol-

erable monotony. Besides, I am late with these bills. We must make haste to finish the job and get away before the police find us."

She drew back and looked at him anxiously.

"Oh, Friederick, do you think there is any danger of our being discovered?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"There is always that danger, careful as we may be. How do we know that the house is not watched? I noticed a stranger loitering about the street as I came in."

Mrs. Martin clasped her hands in distress. Imploringly she cried:

"Then come, Friederick! Don't let us wait till it's too late. If you think we're watched, let us get away while we can."

He shook his head. Doggedly he replied:

"I won't go till my work is done."

"But they may get you."

"No, they won't. They may get my body, but not me."

"You'd kill yourself?"

"Yes, I'd kill myself."

She threw her arms desperately around his neck. Imploringly she cried:

"But think of me, Friederick! Think of me! What would I do if you were gone?"

He turned and patted her affectionately on the cheek.

"Don't worry, dear. They haven't got Fred Kreisler yet. I'll give a good account of myself, I promise you."

Reassured, she smiled again. Lightly she said:

"Perhaps we exaggerate the danger. How should they find us out here?"

He shook his head.

"They can find a needle in the dark. It's their business. You never know when you give them a clue. I don't think it was wise to bring that girl here. I know I gave my consent, but it was a mistake."

"I couldn't help it," she replied, hurriedly. "It would have aroused Kayton's suspicion if I had refused. He would have at once suspected something was wrong and come here to investigate. Then the jig would have been up."

Kreisler nodded.

"You are right, dear. There was no way out of it."

As he spoke the electric buzzer spluttered and crackled. Some one had opened the street-door and was coming up-stairs. Quickly Kreisler jumped up.

"That must be Skidd!" he exclaimed.

Going to the top of the stairs, he peered over a moment, while she watched him anxiously. After a few moments he returned into the room and said:

"No, it's Hurley."

Mrs. Martin made a gesture of disapproval.

"Hurley? He ought to know better than this. He oughtn't—to come here now."

"It's because Gage telephoned him about that girl."

"Oh yes."

Kreisler laughed. Cynically he said:

"He is always finding fault with the things we do, and it is he who makes the mistakes."

The door opened, and Mr. Hurley appeared. The lawyer was immaculately dressed, in frock-coat, gloves, silk hat, and gaiters, all of which looked strangely out of place amid such sordid surroundings. Mrs. Martin advanced to meet him. Severely she said:

"You are wrong to come here!"

He paid no attention to her. Arrogant and aggressive, he advanced into the room with an air of authority. Slamming his hat and cane down on the table and throwing his coat on a chair, he demanded:

"What's all this I hear about your bringing a strange woman here?"

"That's all right," exclaimed Mrs. Martin. "You needn't worry about that. I know what I'm doing."

The lawyer took a seat near the table. Insolently he demanded:

"What *are* you doing?"

Kreisler, who had been going on with his work in silence, now looked up. Quietly he said:

"Don't be so rough. She can explain to you."

The counterfeiter rose, put the bogus banknotes in the money-box, and locked it. Still seated and aggressive, Hurley asked:

"Who is it?"

"Miss Masuret."

The attorney bounded on his chair. This was even worse than he had imagined.

"What? Here?"

Mrs. Martin nodded.

"Kayton asked me to take charge of her."

Their visitor stared at her as if he thought she

had taken leave of her senses. Throwing up his arms in indignant astonishment, he cried:

"My God! Are you crazy?"

She shook her head as she replied, quietly:

"It would have been crazy to refuse."

For a moment the attorney was too much overcome to speak. Finally he spluttered:

"This is a plant!"

"Listen," she began.

But he refused to listen. He saw only the danger to them all by this girl's presence in the house. No doubt everything that had occurred had already been reported to Kayton. Throwing up his hands in discouragement, he cried:

"The one person in the world that you should have kept farthest away from!"

Kreisler looked up. With some impatience he exclaimed:

"Don't talk so much, Hurley! Listen! Listen!"

Mrs. Martin drew up a chair. Bending forward, she said, earnestly:

"When I went in yesterday—about the legacy—he was planning to have the girl disappear. He wanted to protect her from reporters. And besides, he suspected some one in the Argyle house, and he wanted to throw suspicion on her and put them off their guard. It was my telling him I had furnished rooms that put the idea in his head. He thought, of course, that I must be under obligations to Mr. Argyle. I couldn't refuse to take her without arousing his suspicions. How could I? What excuse could I give? I couldn't tell him why we didn't want her here."

Kreisler had risen, and in deep thought paced slowly up and down the room. Turning round, he said:

"It would have been better to let that legacy go!"

Suddenly Mr. Hurley bent forward. Something in her recital had tickled his sense of humor.

"Hold on! Wait! Wait a minute! What was that? Do you mean to tell me that he's using us to throw the real criminals off their guard?"

"Yes. Because he wanted her to disappear. Don't you understand? He put the whole plan right in my hands. He was puzzling about it when I came in. She was there, and he was trying to make some arrangement."

"Well, by God!"

Springing to his feet, the lawyer burst into one of his fits of boisterous, convulsive laughter. Explosively he exclaimed:

"Never-Sleep Kayton! Isn't he wonderful, this great detective? Never-Fail Kayton!"

Again he was taken with a fit of laughter, until he was almost blue in the face.

Kreisler glanced at Mrs. Martin and looked anxiously at the door and window. Such laughter as that might be heard in the street below and attract attention. Approaching the lawyer, he said, warningly:

"Hush, man, hush!"

But Mr. Hurley, once started, was not easy to control. To him the notion of using them to throw the real criminals off their guard was inexpressibly droll, and could only have originated in the brain

of an ass like Kayton. Hilariously he burst out again:

"Oh, it's all advertising! He's a pinhead!" Going back to the table and pointing to the things scattered about the room, he added: "If he knew the tricks of some of this double-jointed furniture, eh, Kreisler?"

Again the counterfeiter held up his hand warningly.

"Hush! Not so loud!"

More calmly, the attorney went on:

"Have you see the papers? They're full of her flight. Everybody is sure of her guilt now."

Mrs. Martin looked up anxiously.

"How terrible! Who is it that Kayton suspects?"

The lawyer smiled. With self-satisfaction he said:

"How could you guess? A man with a mind like that! I suppose he thinks it's Bruce—because he hasn't taken him into his confidence. The boy's distracted; he's got the whole city searching for her."

Mrs. Martin turned to Kreisler. Anxiously she said:

"Friederick, if they never find out the truth, they'll never clear her. And if they do find out—"

Mr. Hurley interrupted her with a gesture. Scornfully he exclaimed:

"Oh, they'll never find out! Kayton will cook up some story to vindicate the girl and cover his failure."

Rising from his seat, he went toward the door. Turning, he asked:

"Has he been here?"

"Yes."

Stopping and coming back to the table, he exclaimed, testily:

"You should have told me. Suppose I'd met him here."

"I never dreamed you'd come, and how could I explain all this over a telephone?"

"What did he say?"

"That his plans were working out satisfactorily—and he thought he'd get the murderer—through an old servant he'd found."

Again the lawyer burst into a noisy fit of laughter.

"Really! Why, *I* put that notion into his head."

Anxious to get rid of their unwelcome visitor, Mrs. Martin looked pointedly at the clock.

"Do you think it wise for you to come here?" she asked.

Mr. Hurley picked up his coat and hat. Hastily he answered:

"No. Most assuredly not, and I'm going right away." As Kreisler went to unlock the door, the lawyer added, with mock politeness:

"Mrs. Martin, I have to thank you for a most enjoyable visit. I'm afraid I sha'n't have the pleasure again for some time. Doctor, if I were you, I would interrupt the practice of my profession while Miss Masuret is in the house. If Kayton should call and get on the wrong floor he might have a shock."

Kreisler looked grave. Quietly he said:

"I think, Mr. Hurley, that if I were you I should leave town."

"Leave town? And miss these consultations with

Kayton? Oh no; I've too much sense of humor for that!"

Again he laughed hilariously. Kreisler held up a warning hand and he stopped abruptly. Turning quickly on his heel, he stammered a hasty good night, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX

LOCKING the door carefully behind the lawyer, Kreisler came back to where Mrs. Martin was sitting. Shaking his head ominously, he said:

"He should have kept away from that detective. It is a bad thing when apprehension makes a man too bold. He should not sniff around traps."

As he spoke the electric buzzer sounded. Mrs. Martin, startled, half jumped up, but the counterfeiter waved her back.

"It's only Hurley going out," he said, calmly.

He sank into a chair and sat staring moodily into space, while his companion sat and watched him in silence. At last, as if giving expression to thoughts that had been worrying her, she exclaimed:

"Friederick, what have I done to Mary? I've tried to keep our lives as far apart as I could, but it seems as if the devil had drawn us together to ruin her."

Kreisler shook his head.

"It is not so. It's the luck of the game—just a little bad luck. It will pass."

Again the buzzer sounded its crackling note of warning. Once more Mrs. Martin sprang to her feet, Kreisler following more leisurely. Going to the door, he said:

"That *must* be Skidd." He has been gone a long time. Something must have detained him."

As he opened the door an angry voice was heard on the staircase saying:

"I know what I'm talking about."

"Oh, shut up!" retorted the voice of Simeon Gage.

Kreisler looked back into the room where Mrs. Martin was waiting apprehensively. With a reassuring nod he said:

"Yes, it is Skidd. Gage is with him."

"I tell you I saw him on the corner," said the first voice again.

"I tell you to shut up!" retorted Gage.

Kreisler smiled.

"I'm afraid Skidd has been drinking," he said.

He came back into the room, followed by a burly, pugnacious-looking individual whose watery eyes and ruddy nose suggested a more than passing acquaintance with the whisky-bottle. As the newcomer entered he turned to Gage, who followed close at his heels, and spluttered:

"I tell you I know what I'm talking about."

The pickpocket entered excitedly and ran at once to the window. Breathlessly he exclaimed:

"Shut that door! This house is watched!"

Mrs. Martin, in alarm, rushed instinctively to Kreisler.

"Friederick!" she exclaimed.

The counterfeiter turned a shade paler as he put his arm protectingly about her. Shaking his head disdainfully, he said:

"Nonsense! I don't believe it."

Sobered to some extent by what he had seen in the street below, but still too much intoxicated for distinct utterance, Skidd broke in, angrily:

"Don't you? Do you believe I'm drunk? Well, they didn't get me so drunk I couldn't keep my eye on them."

Mrs. Martin advanced toward them.

"Who is it? What has happened?" she demanded.

The pickpocket gave his tight trousers a significant hitch.

"Some one's on to us," he leered.

Calmed sufficiently to get his breath, Skidd explained what had aroused his suspicion.

"A wise young guy tried to warm up to me in a saloon, and I couldn't get him drunk—and, believe me, there's something doing when I can't get a man drunk. He was pouring his into the spittoon. When I shook him off I hiked around here and got a look out. They keep passing the house. They don't stop, but they're the same ones, and there's a new newsboy over on the corner. That's damn funny, now, ain't it?"

Kreisler listened in silence. What he heard must have made some impression on him, for in the midst of Skidd's narrative he went quickly to the table and began to remove all vestiges of incriminating evidence. He took the banknotes from the drying-frame, put the bottle, pan, glove, and measuring-glass in the cupboard, extinguished the lamp, and replaced the tin money-box in the closet. Going to Mrs. Martin, he took from her the photographic camera and put it also in the closet, which he locked.

Skidd staggered to his feet and looked at his companions as if asking them to offer some explanation. But no one spoke, and he went on:

"What I want to know is, are they after us, or are

they after that new skirt you've got in here? Who is she? What's she wanted for? What are we running here, anyway—a white-slave annex?"

Mrs. Martin shook her head.

"She's all right, Skidd. She's not wanted for anything. I know all about her."

"Well, what's she so damned mysterious about herself for? What do you keep her shut up in that room for? I may be drunk, but I ain't so drunk I can't be suspicious. I want to see that girl."

"That's impossible," said Mrs. Martin, quietly.

He eyed her suspiciously.

"Why is it impossible? There's something wrong around here, and it's all happened since that girl came —your pocket picked, me pickled, and a bunch of plain-clothes men patrolling the block. We need a quiet life for this business." Tearfully he added: "I'd like to look her over. She can't fool me. I've got a light burning in one good eye that ain't drunk."

Gage pointed to the door. Warningly he said:

"Well, Bill, you'd better hit the hay. You've got a ticket for a long dream."

Skidd grinned.

"Come on down, Simmie, and tuck me in."

As Kreisler unlocked the door the pickpocket shook his head.

"I've got too much tuckin' in to do right here, Bill. You go along now—get sobered up. We may need you."

The fellow started toward the door. When he reached it he turned round, and in a maudlin manner he stammered:

"Good night, Mrs. Martin. I apologize—I simply 'pologize."

Throwing the door open, he staggered back a step or two and then lurched forward and out.

Kreisler, with an exclamation of disgust, closed the door and went back to the table.

"All this trouble for nothing," he grumbled.

Gage shook his head distrustfully. Going toward the door, he said:

"Well, I fly this coop in the morning—early mornin'."

Mrs. Martin turned to Kreisler. Anxiously she asked:

"Is everything safe?"

He nodded.

"Yes."

Gage grinned.

"Nobody could find that stuff but the rats."

As he spoke there was a loud knocking at the door. Outside Skidd's voice was heard saying:

"Mrs. Martin! Mrs. Martin! Open the door—open the door!"

Gage ran quickly to open the door and then came back into the room. As the door opened Skidd rushed in, his face scarlet, his eyes protruding with fear and rage. Excitedly he cried:

"There's a man—there's a man down there!"

As he spoke Kayton entered the room, followed by Mary.

CHAPTER XX

THE detective came boldly in, making a great fuss of virtuous indignation and concealing only with difficulty the satisfaction he felt at the excellent opportunity which Skidd's drunken familiarity had afforded to meet the crooks at close range. Mary, realizing that the long-dreaded crisis was now at hand, but determined to help to the extent of her power the man who had rendered her such signal and unforgettable service, stood in the background pale and trembling.

Advancing threateningly on the retreating and now thoroughly sobered Skidd, Kayton thundered:

"What do you mean by trying to force your way into this young lady's room?" Turning to Mrs. Martin, he added: "Mrs. Martin, is this the sort of protection she's to have in your house?"

For all reply she turned to the offender and pointed to the door. Sharply she said:

"Mr. Skidd, go to your room." Then addressing Kayton, she added, apologetically: "He's been drinking."

Prodded by Gage, the bibulous and befuddled Skidd went protestingly to the door, still unable to understand what the stranger was doing there or why his associates seemed to be disposed to take his part.

"Who is he?" he whispered to the pickpocket.

"Go to your room!" repeated Mrs. Martin, sternly.

Again Gage tugged at his sleeve.

"Come along, Bill."

"Well, who the hell is he?" repeated Skidd, more loudly.

Kayton stepped forward and, addressing Kreisler, who stood by, a silent spectator of the scene, said more amiably:

"Of course, if he's been drinking, he probably made a mistake in the room. I'm sorry if we disturbed you; but won't you see that Miss Masuret is not further annoyed?"

The counterfeiter eyed the detective narrowly, but there was no sign of fear on his face. A little diplomacy might save the situation. Skidd was a damned fool. What did he want to kick up a rumpus for? If they appeared decent, perhaps suspicion would be disarmed and they would be left alone. Cordially he replied:

"I will see that the young lady is not molested in future."

"Thank you."

"Pardon me," said Kreisler, politely, as he passed in front of the detective to go to the door.

"Certainly," replied Kayton, in the same tone, not to be outdone in courtesy.

Kreisler went out, closing the door behind him. When he had disappeared Kayton made a quick step forward to where Mrs. Martin was standing, looking furtively yet tenderly at Mary.

"Mrs. Martin, can't you arrange to give her a room near your own?"

For a moment she looked at him and made no reply. Then with an effort she said:

"Mr. Kayton, I think it would be much better if you would take Miss Masuret away. You can see for yourself that I can't protect her in a house of this sort. I can't have the responsibility."

Kayton shrugged his shoulders. With studied carelessness he replied:

"I can't take her away now. This house is being watched."

The woman started violently.

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed.

The detective hastened to explain.

"It has evidently leaked out that she is here. They may be reporters. They may be police detectives. Young Mr. Argyle has the whole force searching for her. I can't take her away without showing my hand, and she can't go alone. Isn't there a back way so you could escape with her to a hotel?"

Mrs. Martin shook her head.

"It's impossible," she murmured.

Mary now stepped forward.

"Let me go alone," she said.

"No—no!"

Cautiously Kayton went to the door and opened it with a quick jerk, as if expecting to surprise an eavesdropper. Finding no one, he closed it again and came to where the woman stood. Addressing Mrs. Martin, he said, firmly:

"You've got to go!"

She shook her head. Firmly she said:

"I shall not leave this house."

He looked at her in silence for a moment. Evidently, nothing he could say or do would influence this woman. She had a stronger character than he gave her credit for. There was no use beating about the bush any longer. Dropping the mask, he said frankly:

"Mrs. Martin, the men who are watching this house are operatives of the government's Secret Service. Some one living here has been uttering counterfeit money."

"My God!" she cried, instinctively starting for the door.

Quickly stepping forward, he intercepted her.

"Wait! I cannot permit you to speak to any one in this house or do anything to defeat the law in this matter."

Stepping back and trying to control herself, she asked:

"Who is it?"

"I'll not tell you."

"What does it all mean?"

He made no reply, but pointed to the door.

"I advise you to go with Miss Masuret now. Will you?"

"No."

She sat down on a chair, an expression of determined resolution on her face.

"Very well, then."

Involuntarily, Mary made an exclamation of distress.

"What is it?" asked Kayton, going up to her.

"Nothing! Nothing!"

The detective returned to where Mrs. Martin was

sitting. Standing before her with folded arms, he said, deliberately:

"Mrs. Martin, my men are watching this house. The 'Personal' you answered was a plant." His listener started up in terror and then sank back with a groan as he went on: "There was no such legacy. I discovered that you and your husband are engaged with others in a gigantic counterfeiting scheme. I cannot promise you immunity from prosecution, but if you will do what is right by assisting the law, that fact will be taken into consideration by the prosecuting officers. I may be able to assist you there; but in return you must do something for me."

"What?" she asked, almost inarticulately.

"Who killed John Argyle?"

Rising to her feet, she staggered to the door.

"Why do you ask me? I don't know! I don't know!"

"You're the one person who does know!"

"I don't know anything about it."

"You do, and you can save yourself by telling."

She halted, her face deathly pale, and supported herself on the back of a chair. Tremulously she said:

"I don't care for myself! I don't care but for one thing in the world! What are you going to do to Dr. Kreisler? What are you going to do to Dr. Kreisler?"

Kayton shook his head.

"I can't do anything for Dr. Kreisler."

She gave a shriek like an infuriated tigress.

"You must! You shall!" she screamed, at the top of her voice.

The commotion was heard outside, for Kreisler re-entered the room hurriedly. His quick, keen glance flashed inquiringly over the group.

"What's this? What's the matter?" he demanded, sternly.

Mrs. Martin rushed over to him. Regardless of the consequences, her first instinct was to give the alarm to the man she loved. Breathlessly she cried:

"This man is Kayton! He's trapped us!"

The counterfeiter's lips tightened, and, drawing a few steps back, he closed the door and locked it. Calmly he replied:

"Quietly, my dear, quietly. He, too, is in the trap! Now what is it?"

Kayton stepped forward. Fearlessly he said:

"Kreisler, the game's up. You are under arrest! Your wife is implicated with you and others in this counterfeiting. I have offered her a chance to save herself if she will tell me who killed John Argyle."

The counterfeiter shook his head.

"She knows nothing about it."

"She knows everything about it," retorted the detective, decidedly.

Mrs. Martin laid her hand on her husband's arm. Despairingly she cried:

"Friederick, can't you do something?"

The counterfeiter fell back, and, drawing a revolver, he said, grimly:

"I can kill him!"

Before he could pull the trigger, Mrs. Martin sprang at the hand holding the weapon.

"No, no, don't!" she cried.

While Kreisler hesitated, Kayton turned quickly

in the direction of the detectaphone. Loudly he exclaimed:

"I'm trapped, boys! Come and get me!"

Mary, in an agony of suspense, not knowing what dreadful tragedy each second would bring, retreated to the end of the room, covering her face with her hands. The excitement was too much for her nerves. As she saw Kayton threatened with instant death, she gave a shriek and fainted, falling heavily on the sofa. Seeing her fall, Kayton rushed quickly to the window and threw up the sash to let in some air. Turning to Mrs. Martin, he pointed to the prostrate girl.

"Your daughter—she's fainted!"

The woman stared at him in astonishment.

"What—" she stammered. "You know—you know—she's my daughter!"

Kneeling at the couch, Kayton took Mary's hands in his and patted them; then, taking a brandy-flask from his pocket, he put a few drops on her mouth. Contemptuously he cried:

"Do you think I'd have sent her here if I hadn't known you were her mother? I was a fool ever to have let her come. I wouldn't have her hurt or even frightened for all the damned counterfeiters in the world! She's the gentlest thing I ever met. Good God, haven't you any feeling for her at all? I might have known I couldn't trust her to a woman who left her when she was a baby for a crock like Kreisler!"

Mrs. Martin staggered forward and gave a little exclamation of triumph. Turning to Kreisler, she cried:

"Friederick, we've got him!"

The counterfeiter stared, not understanding.

"What do you mean?"

She pointed to the detective, still on his knees at the side of the prostrate girl.

"He's in love with her!"

Kayton rose to his feet.

"And if I am—?"

Advancing toward him, she said, defiantly:

"Whatever you do to me, you do to her! She's my daughter, and I'll claim her."

He shrugged his shoulders as he exclaimed:

"You're a rotten pair!"

She returned to the attack.

"I've kept out of her life until now, but from now on she'll get what I get!"

Incensed beyond his customary self-control, Kayton shook his fist in the woman's face. Furiously he cried:

"You can't drag her down so low that I won't drag her up again. She's accused of this murder, and the only way I can clear her is by showing you up."

Infuriated, Kreisler once more drew his revolver and covered the detective.

"Damn you!" he exclaimed, his finger on the trigger.

Kayton did not flinch. Advancing boldly, although each instant might lay him a corpse on the floor, he said, defiantly:

"Go on—shoot, and your wife goes to the chair for it!" Overawed, realizing that it was no use adding the crime of murder to the other charges against him, Kreisler lowered his pistol, and Kayton went on: "My boys will kill you and your gang here

like rats in a trap! This house is surrounded! There's a detectaphone at that window! My men hear every word we say! I've only to whisper an order to have it obeyed. The moment you threatened to kill me they started to raid the house." As he spoke the electric buzzer sounded violently. Kayton gave a cry of triumph. "There they are! There! There!"

Outside there was the sound of crashing glass and wood, followed by loud voices. The raiding party had effected an entrance and were already on the way up-stairs to the rescue. Quickly, Kreisler rushed to the door and looked out. What he saw convinced him that the game was up. Returning quickly into the room, he put his revolver to his head. Mrs. Martin with a terrible cry rushed forward to stop him, but too late.

"It has come!" he cried, in despair.

He pulled the trigger. There was a loud report, the sound of a body falling heavily; and when the smoke cleared away the leader of the counterfeiters was seen lying on the floor, blood trickling from a small wound in the side of his head. With a despairing cry, her arms outstretched, Mrs. Martin threw herself over the dead body.

"Friederick! Friederick!"

Kayton, at the couch, held Mary in his arms, reviving her with brandy. The electric buzzer crackled and spit furiously. The voices outside came nearer. All at once, the detectives, headed by Joe, burst in. While the others halted to stoop over the dead counterfeiter, the assistant rushed over to his chief.

"Did we get here in time, sir?"

Kayton smiled grimly as he pointed to Kreisler.

"He has saved the government the expense of a trial. Now all we've got to do is to find the man who killed Argyle. I think he's not far off. Call a cab, and we'll take Miss Masuret home."

CHAPTER XXI

NEW-YORKERS love nothing so well as a sensation. If, while partaking of their coffee and eggs, their favorite newspaper fails to furnish a thrilling story of something that has broken loose overnight, they feel that the day has begun badly and that life is humdrum and without interest. When, therefore, on the morning following the Kreisler raid, the papers came out with such big scareheads as *"Counterfeiters Caught!"* *"Kayton and Secret Service Men Seize Millions in Spurious Money,"* there was a rush for special editions that nearly swept the venders off their feet.

The Kayton offices opened earlier than usual that day. Leishman, the manager, and some of the others got down-town shortly after daybreak, all eager to learn the latest details and to be on hand if wanted. Every one wore a smile, and there was an air of suppressed excitement all through the place from manager down to the office-boy. Intensely loyal to their chief, proud of his achievements, each employee felt he had a personal share in the added prestige which Kayton's success had given to the firm.

It was only 7.30 and barely light. Kayton had not yet reached the office, but Leishman and Nash were in his room, busy scanning the papers and chuckling as they read.

"Say, this is immense! Listen," exclaimed the latter, as he read from an editorial. "'*In capturing this man Kreisler, whose skill has for years been a menace to every financial institution, Mr. Kayton has rendered to the government a signal service for which it should show itself duly grateful.*'"

"Fine! Fine!" cried Leishman. "First thing you know, the Congress will pension the boss for life."

"Some class to this office, eh?" grinned Nash.

"'*Currency Fraud of the Century Frustrated!*'" read Leishman.

"Great! great!" cried Nash.

At that moment Cortwright came in, also holding out a newspaper. Eagerly pointing to it, he read aloud:

"'*Raid by Kayton. Sixteen Men Taken Prisoners!*'"

Leishman threw up his hands.

"Hold on—hold on! One at a time, please."

"'*Leader of the Gang Commits Suicide!*'" read out Nash.

Putting the paper aside, the sleuth crossed over to the sofa and threw himself down. Leishman turned to Cortwright:

"Now, what have you got in your paper?"

The detective grinned as he read aloud:

"'*Raid by Kayton. Sixteen Men Taken Prisoners in a Counterfeiting Raid. Leader of the Gang Commits Suicide!*'"

Leishman rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"And some people pretend they don't care what the papers say. I bet the boss is all swelled up this morning."

"He ought to be," grinned Nash.

Running his eye rapidly over the columns devoted to the affair, Leishman asked:

"Any mention of Miss Masuret?"

"Not a word so far."

"That's bully!"

Cortwright held up a page containing a picture of the dead counterfeiter.

"This picture of Kreisler looks like a personal thrust at you, Nash."

The detective grinned.

"Oh! You think every handsome man looks like me," he said, modestly.

The minutes ticked by. It was getting lighter every minute. Going to the window, Leishman threw up the shades and turned off the lights, leaving only one on the chief's desk.

"Who's this young squirt?" demanded Cortwright, pointing to a portrait of Simmie, the pickpocket, in one of the newspapers.

Nash hastened to explain.

"That's Gage, the dip. He went back for his rings and got pinched."

"Well, he's wearin' bracelets now," chuckled Cortwright.

"I wonder how much phony money they had tucked away in that trunk?"

"They're still counting it down at the federal office."

Nash rubbed his hands with glee.

"Well, the governor's busted a money trust, all right!"

"Did any of them get away?" demanded Leish-

man, sorry now that he had not been there to see the fun.

"Yes; one."

"Oh, that's too bad!"

"But the coroner got him," said Nash, grimly.

"Oh, that's great!"

At that moment quick steps were heard in the outer office. The next instant the door was pushed open and Kayton appeared. The men greeted the chief with a cheer. Leishman went up and shook hands.

"Thanks, boys!" smiled Kayton. "Sam, you and Nash had better get your breakfast."

"How about you, gov'nor?" demanded Cortwright.

"I'll wait," smiled Kayton.

Nash, drowsy with sleep, made his way toward the door. With a chuckle he said:

"I'd like to have mine served in bed."

The chief grinned.

"Nash, you're not happy unless you have two nights in bed every week."

When the two men had gone, Kayton turned to his manager.

"Has the stenographer got the rest of this detectaphone report out yet?"

"I'll see, sir."

As Leishman went out to inquire, he bumped into Joe, who entered jauntily, eating an apple. Kayton looked up and gave his assistant an amiable nod. He could not forget that if the raid had been successful he owed much to the loyalty and intelligence of his lieutenant.

"Good morning, Joe."

"Good morning, gov'nor." With a significant grin the young man added, quickly: "Hurley's all right. He's down at his office."

Kayton looked up quickly.

"Down at his office at a quarter past seven! What's the matter?"

The young man came up to the desk and stood there eating his apple. With that familiarity born of consciousness of duty well done and dangers shared in common, he grinned and said:

"He got up with the chickens."

Kayton grinned.

"Nervous, eh? Say, Joe, when you've quite finished your breakfast, I'd like to have a report of this case."

Noticing the sarcasm, the youth quickly apologized.

"I beg your pardon, gov'nor."

The detective smiled good-humoredly. Pointing to the apple, he said:

"Joe, one of those got a man into an awful lot of trouble once."

The young man nodded.

"Yes, I know, gov'nor; but I'm not married."

Kayton laughed, and then, his thoughts full of the case on hand, he hastened to change the conversation.

"Did you get anything on Hurley?"

The assistant laughed.

"Oh, gee! He got up all right and ordered a big breakfast. Then he saw the paper, and couldn't eat a bite. He hiked back to his room and packed

his little bag. Then he read the papers again and unpacked it. We went down on the Subway with him, and he passed his station, and we thought he was going to beat it; but I guess he was so worried he forgot. He's waiting in his office now with his ear to the ground."

Kayton rubbed his hands with satisfaction. Seizing hold of the telephone, he said:

"Let's start a little rumble for him, Joe." Speaking into the transmitter, he said, "Get me Hurley."

As he looked up, while waiting for the connection, Leishman entered with a report.

"Here are the rest of the detectaphone notes," he said.

He went out again, and Kayton, his ear still glued to the 'phone, glanced over the memoranda. He grinned at something he read and, covering the receiver with his hand, looked up and said with a chuckle:

"Say, Joe, Hurley's got me sized up all right. According to him, I'm a pinhead!"

The assistant grinned.

"He has a great sense of humor, gov'nor. He laughed so hard last night that he nearly split the detectaphone."

At that instant the telephone-bell rang. Quickly the detective turned to the transmitter.

"Hello, Mr. Hurley! I've got some good news for you. I think I've obtained a clue to the Argyle case. Drop in and see me this morning, can you? Yes—I'd like to consult you. Well, it's too confidential for the 'phone. All right, thanks. Good-by."

"Will he come?" asked Joe, eagerly.

Kayton looked up and laughed.

"Would *you?*"

"Gee! I wouldn't know what to do!"

"That's what's the matter with Hurley. Joe, go to the hotel. Get Miss Masuret, and without attracting any attention bring her down here."

"All right, gov'nor."

The chief looked curiously at his assistant. Kindly he said:

"Have you had any sleep?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"Naw—I don't want any."

As the assistant went out Leishman entered, holding in his hand a stack of opened telegrams. Taking one off the top, he held it out to his superior.

"This is important, governor. Our office wants you in Chicago right away on that Frazer case."

But Kayton, interested only in the detectaphone report, did not care how important any other business might be. Carelessly he said:

"They've got to wait a minute. Bring me that Nellie Marsh signature."

"It's in the desk here, sir."

Going to the desk drawer, he took out a sheet of paper and, returning, handed it to his employer. Taking it, Kayton said:

"Look here! I want you to type in above the name—there, you see—as if it were the final page of her confession—the usual thing before a notary public, and have two of the boys sign down there, and put in a couple of wafers. Make it 'Page 12 N. M. statement.'"

"Yes, sir." Then, as if an afterthought, he said: "Mr. Colt is here."

"Who?"

"Mr. Colt."

Kayton's first instinct was to put away the box of cigars. He had not forgotten the raid which the federal inspector had made on them on the occasion of his last visit.

"Oh, send him right in," he said.

Leishman went out, closing the door, and Kayton picked up the telephone receiver. Speaking to a clerk in the outer office, he asked:

"Has Joe gone yet?" There was a brief pause, during which the ubiquitous assistant was being summoned to the wire, and then Kayton said: "Oh, Joe, get a compartment on the Twentieth Century for Chicago to-day. Two tickets. Yes, pack your bag. No—it's that Frazer case."

As he hung up the receiver there was the sound of a heavy tread in the passage outside. The next instant the door opened and Colt appeared.

The federal officer advanced, hand outstretched, his broad, fat face wreathed in smiles. This latest feat of Kayton's certainly capped the climax. It was as clever a bit of detective work as the Secret Service had ever known. Accepting modestly the congratulations, Kayton shook hands.

"What's the matter now, Billikens?" he smiled.

"Well, I told you so."

"You talk like a man's wife. Predicted it, eh? You're in the wrong department, Colt. You ought to be with the Weather Bureau."

"How the devil did you do it?"

"Why, I had a witness that I wanted under cover, so I put her in a lodging-house, and it turned out to be the place where the counterfeiters were."

The big fellow shrugged his shoulders incredulously.

"Oh, pickles, pickles, Kayton! I believe in your luck, but I don't believe even you could draw a straight flush to one card."

The chief smiled.

"Well, I may have stacked a little for it."

"I'll bet you did."

"Have you brought Mrs. Martin?"

Colt nodded.

"What's left of her. Say, there's the sort of thing that stumps me—a swindling old crook like Kreisler can mesmerize a woman like that! Why, she's a queen! She's acting now as if she hadn't a thing left in her but her breath because that old con has put himself out of trouble. I never have any luck like that. I've never been able to get a woman to live with me, let alone die with me. Say, you old bloodhound, where are the plates?"

Kayton looked up quickly.

"Whose—Kreisler's?"

"Yes."

"Don't think he used any. He had a new method."

"Think so?"

"That's my theory."

"What was it?"

"Don't know—yet."

Colt shook his head. Somewhat discouraged, he said:

"If that's the case, the government's still the goat. That whole crowd may know the process."

"No—my idea is it was between Kreisler and his wife."

"Well, son, you'll never get her combination. She's got a mouth that's burglar-proof."

"Think so, Colt?"

"Have you found out how old Argyle was such a damned fool as to mix up with these people?"

"That stumped me for a long time, but I think I've got the explanation."

"What is it?"

"Well, I've always found that whenever you run into an abnormal mystery there's always an abnormal cause for it. In this case it was probably—insanity."

"Do you think Argyle was bug?"

"That's the line I'm working on. He doesn't seem to have shown any signs of it except in his quarrels with his son, and he was queer about his will."

Turning away and taking up the telephone, Kayton spoke into the instrument:

"Leishman, send in Mrs. Martin."

Colt got up and moved to one side, pulling himself together and standing with a smile waiting for the counterfeiter's wife to come in. Kayton looked at him in an amused kind of way. Waving him away, he said:

"Good-by, Colt; good-by!"

The inspector looked at him in surprise.

"Good-by?" he echoed, in dismay.

"Fade away, fade away!" said Kayton, waving him to be gone.

Reluctantly, Colt went toward the door. Turning round, he grumbled:

"I'd like to bet you she won't squeal."

"All right; go home and break open the baby's bank and bet."

"Nix on that baby's bank!" laughed the officer.

CHAPTER XXII

DRESSED in somber black, her drawn, pinched features partly concealed by a veil which only served to intensify her extreme pallor, her eyes swollen from constant weeping, Mrs. Martin advanced slowly into the room, a grim figure of stalking tragedy.

She made no sign of recognition, but, going up to the desk, stood there motionless, waiting for the detective to speak. To her this man, who had robbed her of everything she held dear on earth, represented the enemy. There was murder now in her heart as, with sullen hatred, she silently watched him through her tears. What did he want more with her? Why this ceaseless persecution? Was it not enough that her husband was dead and she condemned to go on living a life of utter loneliness and despair? How she hated them all—these detectives who took professional pride in hunting down their prey! If only she had a weapon in her hand! Quickly she would use it, reckless of the consequences. But what could she do alone? Weakened, unstrung from long fasting and a sleepless night, she staggered to a chair for support, and for a few moments nothing was said. They merely stared steadily at each other, each well aware that what was to come would

be a duel of wits. Finally, unable to control herself any longer, she burst out:

"God, I wish I'd let him kill you!"

Kayton shrugged his shoulders. Carelessly glancing over the papers on his desk, he replied, calmly:

"What good would that have done? If I hadn't caught him, some one else would. You were both playing a game that you couldn't win. You knew it. You said so; you told him yourself that every prison in the world was waiting for him."

"He's dead—he's dead!" she sobbed, sinking into a chair near the desk.

He watched her in silence, his heart full of sympathy and pity for this woman who suffered so cruelly. Kindly he said:

"There was nothing else for him to do but kill himself. Why, he killed himself when he went into this. The government would never have let him out. He'd have been buried alive."

Almost beside herself, hardly conscious of what she was doing, she made wild, extravagant gestures with her arms. Distractedly, she cried:

"Oh, let me alone—let me alone!"

"I would if I could," he replied. "I've had to make you a good deal of trouble; now I'd like to give you a little help if I can. You haven't any one to advise you, have you?"

She looked up at him, her face plainly showing her distrust. Cautiously she said:

"You fooled me once—"

"I'd fool you again, if I had to—and could. But as far as I'm concerned this case closed with the arrests. I want to help you."

She shook her head despondently.

"I don't want any help."

"I want to do what I can," he went on. "It's not necessary for you to go to prison. You have something to offer the government in exchange for clemency. If your husband left any plates, or any formula, or any record of his method, it will save you if you can turn them up."

"I won't tell you a thing!" she said, determinedly.

Kayton looked at her fixedly. If that was her attitude, he must try different tactics. Changing his manner, he said firmly:

"I'm not asking you—I'm *telling* you. If you refuse to give up those plates, the government will put you where you can't use them."

"I don't care. I don't care what you do!" she cried, defiantly.

"If there aren't any plates, haven't you any records of his process that you could give up to save yourself?"

"I don't know anything about his process, and I wish to God he'd never known anything about it!"

"If that's true, there's no need of your going to prison as a counterfeiter. You're practically innocent. You can go on the stand as State's witness, and by your testimony that these other men know nothing of your husband's process you can save them from long terms.

She nodded wearily.

"Yes, yes, I can do that."

Having turned the conversation round to the point where he wanted it, he said quickly:

"You can do exactly the same thing in the Argyle case."

Sensing a trap, she rose to her feet and clutched wildly at the table with her two hands. Excitedly she cried:

"Why do you say that? Why do you pretend I know anything about that?"

The detective also rose. Bending forward and fixing her with his steady gaze, he said, slowly and emphatically:

"Because, after Mr. Argyle fell, dragging off the table-cloth, you were leaning forward—holding on to the table with both hands, as you are doing now."

Realizing the full significance of his words, she drew back in terror.

"What!" she exclaimed.

Quickly he drew the hand-prints from the drawer.

"These are the finger-marks you left on the table that night. These are identical with the ones you left here on my blotter. This is jury proof of complicity—"

Overcome at this revelation, she fell back gasping. Hoarsely she exclaimed:

"I had nothing to do with it—nothing!"

He shrugged his shoulders as he retorted:

"To prove that you will have to confess who did."

Bounding forward like some infuriated animal trapped into an admission, she cried, wildly:

"You can do what you like! I don't care! I don't care! It doesn't matter!"

"It matters to an innocent girl," he replied, quietly. "Your daughter's life is ruined unless we can clear her from this charge of murder."

Leaning forward over his desk, she cried, in a hysterical manner:

"Her life's ruined if you drag me into this case! You can't—you can't do it without uncovering everything—everything! You won't do it! If you love her you can't do it! Would you marry the daughter of a woman disgraced?"

For a moment Kayton hesitated, but only for a moment. Raising his head, he replied, emphatically:

"I'd marry your daughter out of hell if she'd come to me!"

Almost hysterical, Mrs. Martin sobbed:

"And if she's anything like her mother she'd go to hell for you—if she loved you!"

"And yet you refuse to do anything for her?"

"I don't want her to know me; I don't want to know her. I'm dead as far as she is concerned."

"If you go on the stand as State's witness, your past can be absolutely protected. Your daughter need never know."

"You don't need me to clear her! You know she didn't do it. You know it was some one else. Leave me alone! Leave me alone! Find him yourself!"

"Who? Hurley?" asked the detective, quietly.

He watched her narrowly to judge of the effect of the name, but she remained impassive. Shaking her head, she said:

"I didn't say it. I didn't say it. I haven't told you a thing."

At that moment Joe entered from the outer office. Kayton looked up quickly:

"Is she here?"

"Yes, gov'nor."

"Bring her in."

The assistant went out, and Mrs. Martin turned to the detective. Supplicatingly she cried:

"Who is it? Mary? Oh, let me out of here! I don't want to see her! I won't stay here!"

Before he could reply the door opened and Mary appeared. She had heard Mrs. Martin's appeal, and the grieved accents of the woman's voice had gone right to the young girl's heart. Sympathetically she said:

"Please don't go yet. I wanted to see you again. I'm so sorry."

Mrs. Martin turned away. Shaking her head, she said, bitterly:

"No, no! I don't want any sympathy. I—"

Kayton spoke up.

"Miss Masuret, I'm trying to persuade Mrs. Martin to tell me who killed Mr. Argyle—to clear you."

"He knows — he knows!" cried Mrs. Martin, wildly.

"Yes, I know. But I can't prove it. I can't clear her, and you can."

The young girl took the older woman's hand.

"Why won't you? To help us?"

Shrinking from the contact, Mrs. Martin cried, hysterically:

"No, no! He trapped me into betraying them all —through you! I've lost everything through you— all I had! I hadn't anything but him. They've killed him—they've killed him—they've killed me! I don't care what happens now. I won't do anything for any of you—I won't—I won't—I won't!"

Looking back and making a last gesture of defiance, she turned and left the office.

The door had not yet closed behind her before Kayton sprang to the 'phone and gave the command:

"Leishman, hold Mrs. Martin."

Mary sighed as he laid down the receiver.

"Oh, poor woman! I wish I could do something for her!"

Kayton smiled.

"Don't worry. She'll be all right."

"You won't send her to prison?"

"No, no; I'm only trying to get a statement from her to clear the case up. We must have it to prove her innocence and yours."

"I wish I could help her!"

The telephone-bell rang. Kayton picked up the receiver. After listening he said: "Oh, tell him to come right in." Turning to Mary, he smiled and said: "It's Bruce."

The office door was pushed open, and Bruce Argyle entered hurriedly, his face radiant. The news of the morning's papers had at last given him a clue to Mary's whereabouts. Her sudden disappearance and the air of mystery surrounding it had worried him to distraction and given rise to all kinds of rumors, but his own confidence had never failed. He and Nan were sure that it was for the best, whatever she had done. Coming forward, arms extended, he cried:

"Oh, Mary!"

Falling in his embrace just as a sister would, all she could say was:

"Bruce!"

The youth dashed back to the door to tell the glad news to others who were with him.

"Nan—Nan—Mrs. Wyatt—she's here!"

The next instant in rushed Nan, followed by Mrs. Wyatt. All fell round the young girl's neck and talked excitedly. Nan, overjoyed, was almost in tears. Hysterically she cried:

"Mary! Where have you been? How could you do it? What did you do it for?"

"Please don't mind. I had to—to help Mr. Kayton."

Bruce stared. In an injured tone he exclaimed:

"Has Kayton known all the time? Well, I think I've been pretty badly treated."

The detective, after several attempts to break in, stepped forward:

"I'm sorry to interrupt this little family party, but I'll have to use this office for business. There's a waiting-room out there." Urging them toward the door, he added: "Bruce, I want to see you again before you're finally discharged."

Turning round, the youth said, reproachfully:

"Why didn't you tell me where she was? Did you think I couldn't keep my mouth shut?"

Kayton laughed. Going back to the desk, he said:

"I didn't want you to keep it shut. I wanted you to holler."

"Well, I hollered, all right."

"You did. I heard you."

Mary still stood there watching him. Timidly she asked:

"Do you mind if I go and talk to Mrs. Martin?"

He smiled.

"I'd like you to do anything you can for Mrs. Martin."

He opened the door for her, and she passed out. He watched her go, and then returned to his desk with a sigh. What a girl! Every day he liked her better. If he was only sure she cared for him he would hesitate no longer. His thoughts were more full of her than of his work when suddenly Leishman entered.

"Hurley's here!" he said, hastily.

Kayton started. The critical moment had arrived.

"Have you got that confession rigged up?" he asked.

The manager held out a paper.

"Here it is, sir."

Kayton glanced it over and smiled.

"That looks convincing. This is where we pull a woman out of the water when she's determined to drown; but I think it's the man who will go under this time. Send him in, and the instant I touch this button send in Mrs. Martin."

The manager went to the door and spoke to some one waiting in the hall outside.

"Come in, Mr. Hurley."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE lawyer entered hurriedly, his furtive, uneasy glance quickly scanning the detective's face, as if trying to guess what was in his mind.

"Good morning, Mr. Kayton," he smiled, with cheerfulness that was obviously forced.

Kayton lit a cigar.

"Good morning, Mr. Hurley."

In spite of the fact that the recent turn which events had taken were calculated to cause him considerable anxiety, the attorney's manner was outwardly calm and as full of self-assurance as ever; but it did not escape the detective's close scrutiny that his mouth twitched nervously. Appearing to notice nothing, he said, lightly:

"How are you?"

Reluctantly the attorney advanced toward the desk.

"Well, I'm very busy this morning, Mr. Kayton, but I want to oblige you. What is the clue?"

Pretending to be busy with his papers, Kayton did not answer the question at once. The longer he could keep his caller in suspense, the more nervous he would get, the better he could keep him under observation. All at once, when he judged the moment right, the detective looked up and said, quickly:

"It's a little better than a clue. I think we've got the man who killed Argyle."

Involuntarily the lawyer fell back a few steps. All the color receded from his usually ruddy face, leaving him ghastly pale.

"Well—well—" he stammered.

Coolly Kayton extended to him the box of cigars.

"Have a cigar?" he said, amiably.

With trembling fingers the lawyer took one.

"Thanks!" he mumbled.

Kayton waved him to a seat.

"Sit down," he said.

But his visitor was too much perturbed to heed the invitation. Nervously he said:

"Who is it? Who is it?"

Again the detective waved him to a seat. Imitating the lawyer's mannerism of speech, he said:

"I'll tell you about that. Sit down."

Paler and more uneasy every minute, the attorney took a chair. There was a slight pause, and then Kayton, in the most matter-of-fact way, went on:

"Mr. Hurley, when did it first occur to you that Mr. Argyle's mind was affected?"

For a moment the lawyer made no reply, but stared at his interlocutor, the pallor of his face increasing every moment. With a painfully forced smile he faltered:

"I don't get you."

"You will," said the detective, calmly. "You don't think that you could interest a man in his position—a millionaire—in a scheme for counterfeiting if he were in his right mind?"

The lawyer started violently.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, hoarsely.

Kayton shrugged his shoulders. Flecking the ash off his cigar, he asked, carelessly:

"Mr. Hurley, did you ever try a case?"

His visitor smiled awkwardly.

"You forget that I'm a lawyer."

"I don't forget it; I don't believe it."

"What are you driving at?"

Suddenly changing the subject, Kayton asked:

"Mr. Hurley, did you ever see a detectaphone?"

The visitor opened his eyes.

"A what?"

Kayton opened a drawer, and, taking out the delicate little instrument, he held it up for inspection.

"A detectaphone. Don't be afraid. It won't bite you. It doesn't do anything but listen; and it's got the longest ears—it makes a sucker look like a jackass. As you saw in the morning papers before you packed your bag, we arrested a gang of counterfeiters last night, after we had been listening to them for some time with our little detectaphone. Interesting conversations, too, Hurley. They say listeners never hear any good of themselves. Let me read you what you said about me: '*Never-Sleep Kayton! Isn't he wonderful, this great detective? Oh, it's all advertising! Eh, Kreisler? He's a pinhead.*' ''*Sh!' Hurley, not so loud!*'"

With a muttered exclamation, the lawyer sprang to his feet. Angrily, he exclaimed:

"Do you think you can bluff me with a framed-up thing like that?"

Kayton was trying hard to keep his temper, but the man's arrogance irritated him.

"Let me finish!" he went on. "We pinched the whole bunch, and I advised Mrs. Martin to do what she could for herself by making a complete statement of the facts as she knew them, and in her confession here she not only implicates you with these counterfeiters, but she also charges you with the murder of John Argyle!"

His face livid, the lawyer turned to leave the room.

Kayton peremptorily called him back. Holding out a document, the detective asked:

"Do you know that signature?"

Hurley glanced at it hastily and shook his head.

"I tell you it's a fake—to protect herself."

The detective touched a button. Quietly he went on:

"Then you mean to say that Mrs. Martin is responsible for the death of John Argyle?"

As he spoke the door opened and Mrs. Martin entered. Kayton turned to her:

"Mrs. Martin, Mr. Hurley has just stated that it was you who killed John Argyle."

The woman's pale face flushed with indignation. Advancing on the lawyer, brandishing her fists, she exclaimed, hotly:

"What! You! you! you!" Turning to Kayton, she almost screamed: "It's a lie! He killed him!"

Deathly white, his features haggard, his eyes starting with ill-concealed terror, the lawyer faltered:

"I've been trying to protect her. That's the way I've got involved in this. She killed him! I'll sign a statement."

Turning away with a contemptuous shrug of her

shoulders, Mrs. Martin made no further attempt to protect herself. Sure that the detective was convinced of her innocence and knew who the assassin was, she dropped into a chair and sat motionless, her head bowed.

Kayton, his arms folded, stood gazing sternly at the wretched man, who was trying desperately to save himself by fixing guilt on a woman. Contemptuously, he exclaimed:

"Hurley, you can go to hell your own way. If you haven't sense enough to see that it's better to make a clean breast of it and stand for a charge of manslaughter, you can go to the chair as a counterfeiting crook that tried to blackmail an old man and murdered him when he rounded on you. You gave stuff to the papers to throw suspicion on the girl and the boy. You came nosing around here trying to tip off my hand, and the minute you saw yourself caught you turned on a woman and tried to sell her out. You're under arrest, and the charge is murder in the first degree!"

Bounding forward, his pallid face distorted with terror, his hands clutching convulsively the top of the desk, the lawyer cried:

"Just a minute, Mr. Kayton!"

Quick as a flash the detective produced a pair of handcuffs and snapped them on his wrists.

"You're just a minute too late!"

He pushed a button three times, and Joe hurried in, followed closely by Nash and Cortwright.

Realizing that the end had come, and that nothing further was to be gained by lying, the lawyer cried:

"Before God, Kayton, I tell you it was an accident! He'd gone into this counterfeiting. Then suddenly he shifted and threatened to show me up. I took her there to try and use her influence to fix it. As soon as he saw her he pulled a gun and tried to shoot her. I knocked it out of his hands. He sprang on me and tried to strangle me. I didn't want to hurt him; I just beat him off, trying to defend myself, and the first thing we knew he was dead on our hands."

The detective shrugged his shoulders. Coldly he said:

"I don't want to hear your troubles. Tell them to the district attorney. Boys, take this man away!"

Nash and Cortwright seized hold of the lawyer and dragged him toward the door leading to the outer office. Resisting with all his strength, the lawyer cried:

"Wait a minute, boys! Wait a minute!"

Joe gave him a poke in the ribs. Scornfully he exclaimed:

"Come on, you big stiff. Take your medicine."

Still struggling, raving, and cursing, Mr. Hurley was gradually forced to the door. As they dragged him along he shrieked:

"Take your hands off me, damn you! You can't do it! Where are your papers? I want a lawyer! Kayton, give me a chance. I can square it with you. How much do you want?"

"Shut up!" said the detective, sharply.

The unhappy man cast an appealing glance round. Wildly he cried:

"My God, it's my life! It's the end of it!"

That was the last they heard. The next instant they had pulled him through the door, which closed behind him.

Joe threw up his hands in comic horror.

"Gee, but he's got a yellow streak in him!"

Kayton laughed. Facetiously he said:

"After they've had him in the electric chair they'll have to fumigate it!"

The assistant went out, and the detective pressed a button which brought Leishman in. Kayton pointed to the visitor. Significantly, he said:

"Wait outside, Leishman. Get your hat."

"Yes, gov'nor."

The detective rose and approached Mrs. Martin. Kindly he said:

"Mrs. Martin, would you like to go and take care of Dr. Kreisler?"

The woman lifted her pale, tear-stained face and gazed at the detective in open-eyed astonishment.

"Oh yes, yes—if I only could!" she cried, clasping her hands.

He waved his hand in the direction of the door.

"You may—go."

"I may?" she cried, the tears springing to her eyes from joy.

He nodded.

"Yes; I'll send my manager with you. I'll come over as soon as I can and arrange so that you'll be detained only as a witness. You think I've treated you brutally. I have, but it was the only way to save you."

Mrs. Martin staggered to her feet. Weakly she stammered:

"If I could feel anything at all I'd thank you, but I'm dead here—dead—dead."

Helplessly she beat her bosom, as if trying to express all she felt, and her lips moved as if she wished to tell him something; but before she could speak the office door opened, and Mary entered. Kayton went quickly to the young girl. Quietly he said:

"Miss Masuret, I thought you would like to say good-by to Mrs. Martin."

Mary looked sympathetically at the sad, bowed figure standing at the other side of the room. Advancing quickly and taking the visitor's hand, she said:

"Oh, sha'n't I see you again?"

Mrs. Martin shook her head sadly. Moving slightly away from the girl's embrace and averting her face, she murmured:

"No."

"Good-by," said Mary, holding out her hand.

Turning quickly round, Mrs. Martin eagerly grasped it. Her body shaken by sobs, the tears rolling down her cheeks, she said, with much emotion:

"Good-by!" Drawing the young girl closer, she went on, her voice broken by weeping: "You're where I was twenty years ago. You have just the same possibilities for love and self-sacrifice." Pointing to Kayton, she went on: "This man loves you. He's waiting to take your life and make it what he wants it to be. Like me, you'll give everything."

She said no more, but clasped her daughter's hand tightly in both of hers. Pressing it to her breast and

raising it to her lips, she gazed at her long and earnestly. It was their last farewell. Shaking her head sadly, she murmured:

"Well, what matter? It must be."

Reluctantly releasing the young girl, she turned away and slowly left the office. Mary, the tears rolling down her cheeks, turned to Kayton, who sprang forward eagerly. Before he could reach her the telephone rang. Impatiently taking up the receiver, he said:

"Well, what is it? No; I'm not going to Chicago. I've got an urgent case here."

Mary looked up anxiously.

"An urgent case?" she asked.

"Yes—ours," he smiled. Taking her gently in his arms, he whispered: "Mary, our joint detective work is ended. We are entitled to some rest and happiness now. Will you be my wife?"

"Yes," she murmured, through her tears.

THE END